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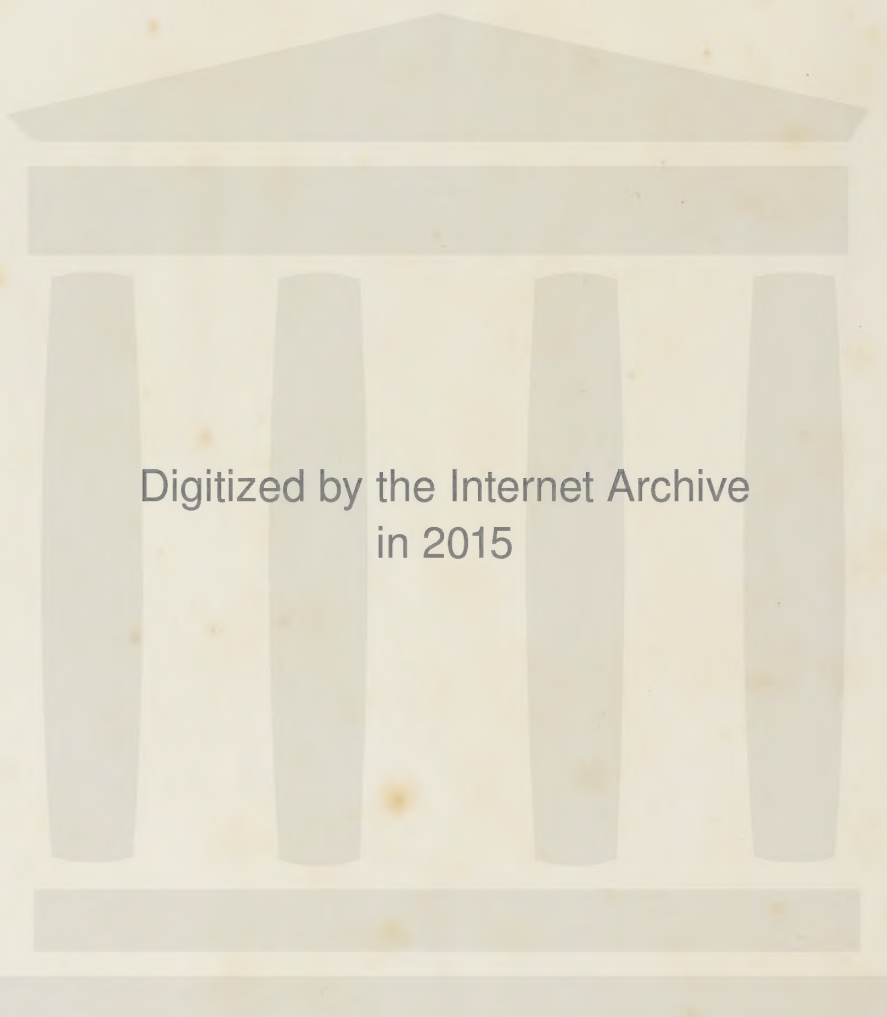


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RICHARD WILSON, ESQ. R.A.

London, Pub^d by Longman, Hurst & Co. May, 1824

SOME ACCOUNT
OF
THE LIFE
OF
RICHARD WILSON, Esq. R.A.

WITH
TESTIMONIES TO HIS GENIUS AND MEMORY,
AND
REMARKS ON HIS LANDSCAPES.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
VARIOUS OBSERVATIONS RESPECTING THE PLEASURE AND ADVANTAGES TO BE
DERIVED FROM THE STUDY OF NATURE AND THE FINE ARTS.

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED
BY T. WRIGHT, Esq.

O! attend,
Whoe'er thou art; whom these delights can touch,
Whose candid bosom the refining love
Of Nature warms,
And I will guide thee to her favourite walks,
And teach thy solitude her voice to hear,
And point her loveliest features to thy view.

AKENSIDE.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE ARTISTS' BENEVOLENT FUND,
BY
LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1824.

TO
SIR FOSTER CUNLIFFE, BART.,

WHOSE REFINED TASTE AND SINGULAR SUAVIDY OF MANNERS

BESPEAK NO LESS A CULTIVATED MIND
THAN A FRIENDLY AND BENEVOLENT HEART,

THIS HUMBLE TRIBUTE

TO THE GENIUS AND MEMORY OF

RICHARD WILSON,

IS

MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

*Norwood Park,
April 6. 1824.*

P R E F A C E.

SHOULD the remarks contained in the following pages be fortunate enough to attract the attention of any lover of the art, the writer hopes that every allowance will be made for such errors and imperfections as may be found in them.

The vanity of wishing to appear as an *author* will not be laid to his charge, since his book is, avowedly, made up of the thoughts and observations of others, much more than of his own. The first and principal motive which influenced him in collecting and arranging the materials of which it is composed, arose, almost entirely, from an anxious desire of rescuing from oblivion whatever related either to the life or the works of our much-neglected countryman. The writer has in vain hoped that some abler pen would have undertaken a task of a similar kind, and have left some substantial record concerning so superior an artist; but as now nearly half a century has elapsed since the period of Wilson's career, and as nothing immediately relating either to his private life or professional pursuits has been given to the world, (save some cursory notices of him, interspersed in the works of writers upon other subjects,) the author is emboldened to commit the following particulars to the press, under the idea that he is performing a *duty*, in this attempt, to render that justice which has been too long delayed to the merit of great and ill-requited genius.

If he shall be found, in any degree, to have succeeded, and if he may prove instrumental in drawing the attention of others to the study of an art, which he does not scruple to declare constitutes one of the first pleasures of his own life, the end which he has in view will have been fully attained.

In the accomplishment of this object, he will, on the one hand, have discharged some portion of that debt which he owes for the gratification he has so constantly received from the productions of our great painter; and, on the other, he will feel the satisfaction of having imparted to others a source of real and increasing enjoyment, the value of which those only can justly appreciate who have experienced the singular delight that the contemplation of Nature, with a view to the copying of her works, never fails to afford.

“To enjoy a prospect, or a picture,” observes a late writer, “is within the power of good sense; but, like the science of music, its utmost pleasure can only be reached by the artist and connoisseur.”

“*Quam multa vident pictores in umbris, et in eminentia, quæ nos non videmus!*”*

* “How many admirable effects of light and shade, and other beautiful combinations, are observed by the painter, which by others are either not seen or not regarded!”

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TESTIMONIES
TO
THE GENIUS AND MEMORY
OF
RICHARD WILSON, Esq. R.A.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND FAMILY OF WILSON. — GOES TO LONDON. — PRACTISES PORTRAIT PAINTING. — VISITS ITALY. — IS PERSUADED TO TAKE UP LANDSCAPE PAINTING. — COLOMONDIE, THE PLACE WHERE HE DIED. — ANECDOTE OF HIM. — VILLAGE OF LLANVERRIS, OR LOGGERHEADS. — ADVANTAGE OF SKETCHING. — PLEASURE TO BE DERIVED FROM THE STUDY OF NATURE. — PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF WILSON.

THIS great landscape painter, the distinguished ornament of the British school, was the third son of a clergyman in Montgomeryshire; his father was of a very respectable family in that county, in which he possessed a small benefice, but was soon after the birth of our artist collated to the living of Mould in Flintshire; his mother was of the family of Wynne of Leeswold. They had six sons and a daughter, all of whom died unmarried. The eldest son obtained a situation in Mould, as collector of customs, and died two years after the painter. The second was a clergyman, who had good preferment in Ireland. Richard, born in 1713, was the third. The

fourth was a tobacconist at Holywell ; he afterwards went to Pennsylvania, where he died. The youngest, when a little boy, was killed by part of the Barley-hill, at Mould, falling upon him, whilst playing under it. Miss Wilson was an attendant on Lady Sandown, a lady of the bed-chamber to Queen Caroline, through whose means Richard Wilson was introduced to the Royal Family.

It is not known that any of the family of Wilson had a taste for painting except Richard, whose marked predilection for drawing discovered itself when he was quite a child. At that early period, he might be frequently seen tracing, with a burnt stick, figures upon the wall. His relation, Sir George Wynne, took him to London, where he was placed under the tuition of one Wright*, an obscure painter of portraits. Wilson however acquired so much knowledge from his master, as to become equal to most of his contemporaries, in that line of art. He must also have acquired a degree of rank in his profession, as about the year 1748 he painted a large picture of His late Majesty, when Prince of Wales, with his brother, the late Duke of York, which was done for Dr. Hayter, Bishop of Norwich, at that time tutor to the princes. He also painted another portrait of the same august personage, from which there is a mezzotinto print by Faber. The original picture is announced as in the collection of the Rev. Dr. Ascough, and is dated 1751. There is also a half-length portrait of the late Marquis of Rockingham, painted by Wilson, in Italy. It is in the style of Rembrandt, and belongs to Lord Fitzwilliam, who brought it from his seat of Wentworth House to his residence in Grosvenor Square, where it was at the time that Mr. Edwards wrote his *Anecdotes of Painters*, who remarks, that "in this picture Wilson made great use of asphaltum, throughout, to produce the deep transparent tones of Rembrandt."

"As a portrait painter," continues this writer, "Wilson is not

* Thomas Wright, an artist of whom Mr. Walpole takes not the least notice, nor does any mention appear to be made of him, except what can be found in the inscriptions under three prints by Gerard Vander Gutch, engraved after cartoons of Guido, "In the collection of T. Wright, Painter, Covent Garden."





JOSEPH VERNET.

sufficiently known, nor are his works marked by any traits which distinguish them from the general manner which then prevailed among his contemporaries. No decided character can therefore be affixed to them. It may, however, be asserted, that in drawing a head he was not excelled by any of the portrait painters of his time. A proof of this was formerly in the possession of J. Richards, Esq. one of the founders, and Secretary to the Royal Academy; it is the portrait of Admiral Smith, drawn before Wilson went abroad. It is executed in black and white chalk, as large as life, upon brown French paper, and is treated in a bold masterly manner; but this is not a work which can authorise the critic to consider him as superior to the other portrait painters of his day.”*

After having practised some time in London, he was enabled, by the assistance of his relations, to travel into Italy, where he continued the study of portrait painting, being still unacquainted with the bias of his genius. He frequented good society, and was much respected by his countrymen abroad.

Wilson, probably, might have remained ignorant of the peculiar bent of his talents, but for the following circumstance: One day, while waiting for the coming home of Zucarelli, upon whom he had called at Venice, he made a sketch in oil from the window of the apartment, with which that artist was so highly pleased, that he strongly recommended him to apply himself to landscape painting. Another occurrence, which happened not long afterwards, tended to confirm him in his inclination to follow that pursuit. The celebrated French painter, Vernet, whose works, at that period, were held in the highest estimation, happening one day, while both these artists were studying at Rome, to visit Wilson's painting room, was so struck with a landscape he had painted, that he requested to become the possessor of it, offering in exchange one of his best pictures; the proposal was readily accepted, and the picture delivered to Vernet, who, with a liberality as commendable as it is rare,

* Edwards's Anecdotes of Painters.

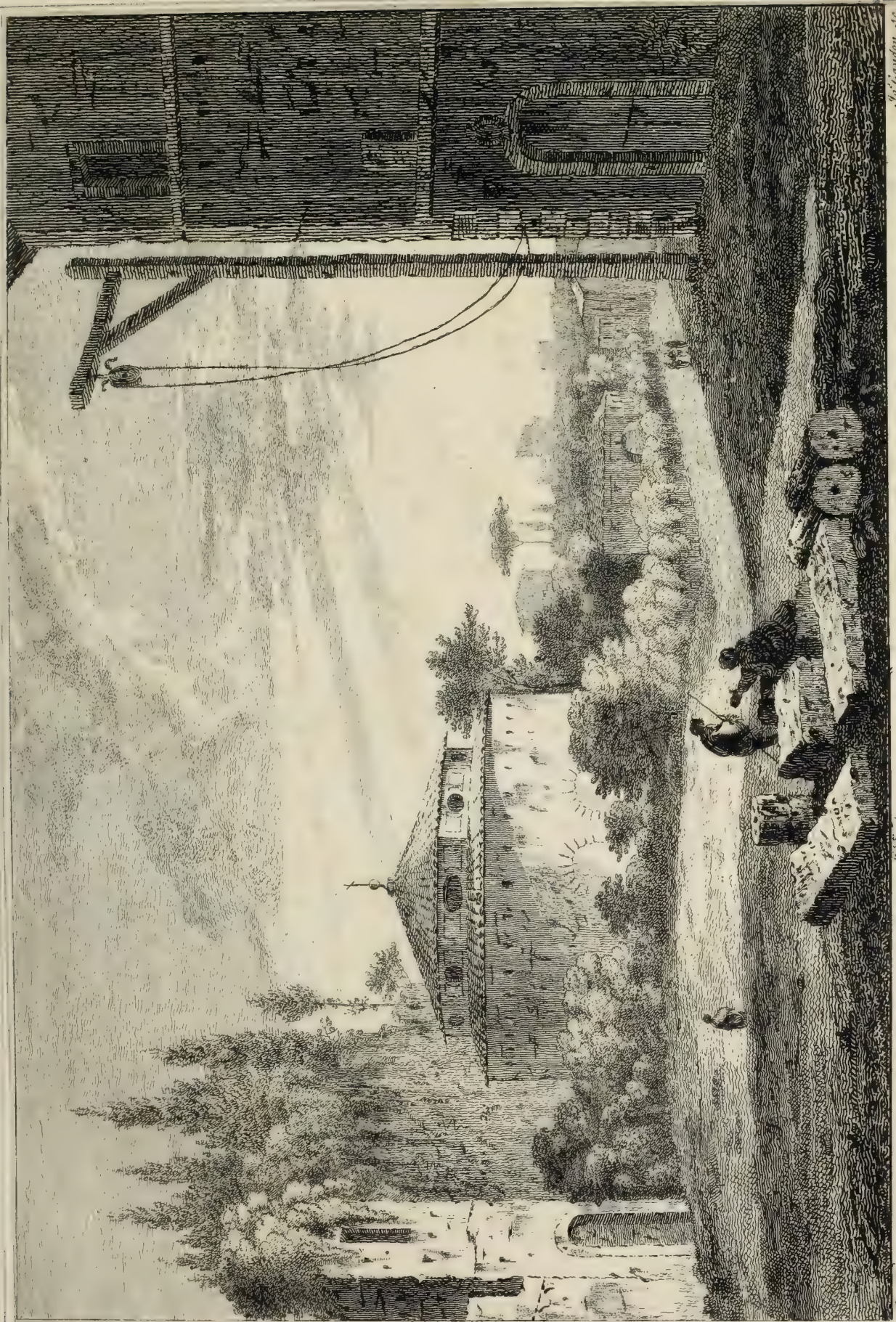
placed it in his exhibition room, and recommended the painter of it to the particular attention of the *cognoscenti*, as well as to the English nobility and gentry who happened to be visiting the city. "Don't talk of my landscapes, when you have so clever a fellow in your countryman Wilson," was the observation of this liberal French artist.

Though there is reason to believe that Wilson had painted some landscapes* before he went abroad, yet it is certain that he did not commence a regular course in that study until after he had been some time in Italy. When he began, however, he did not waste his time, nor subjugate his powers to the unimproving drudgery of copying pictures of the old masters, but contented himself with making his observations upon their works, and afterwards confirming those observations by his studies from nature. In consequence of this prudent method of cultivating his talents, he wisely avoided any decided imitation of the pictures of the Italian masters who preceded him, and at once struck out a manner, both of execution and design, which was classical, grand, and original.

Of the originality of his style we are convinced by inspecting his works, and in most of them he has represented the *general character* of Italy with more decided precision than can be found in the works of his predecessors. His studies in landscape must have been attended with rapid success, for it is well known that he had pupils in that line, while at Rome, and his works were so much esteemed, that Mengs painted his portrait, for which Wilson in return painted a landscape.

He remained abroad six years, having left England in 1749, whither he returned in 1755. His residence in London, after his return, was over the north arcade of the Piazza, Covent Garden. He afterwards lived in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, and also in Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, in apartments which have been since occupied by Mr. Theed, the sculptor. Besides the above-men-

* There is a print, engraved by J. S. Miller, from a picture painted by R. Wilson, a "View of Dover," without date, but generally supposed to have been executed before he went abroad.



TEMPLE of ROMULUS and REMUS.

R. Wilson del.

W. Gandon sc.

1871

1871

1871

tioned, he is said to have had several other places of abode, following his great instructress Nature into the fields, in Mary-la-Bonne, and changing his quarters as often as his view was intercepted by the erection of a new building, with more regard, perhaps, to his love of landscape than to his pecuniary circumstances. At one period he resided at the corner of Foley Place, Great Portland Street. His last abode in London was at a mean house in Tottenham Street, Tottenham Court Road, in which he occupied the first and second floors, almost without furniture.

To the first Exhibition of 1760, in the Great Room at Spring Gardens, he sent his picture of Niobe, which confirmed the reputation he had previously gained as a landscape painter. It was bought by William Duke of Cumberland, and came afterwards into the possession of His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester. In 1765, he exhibited, with other pictures, a "View of Rome, from the villa Madama," or rather, perhaps, from the neighbourhood of the Monte Mario; a capital performance, which was purchased by the late Marquis of Tavistock.

At the institution of the Royal Academy, Wilson was chosen one of the founders; and after the death of Hayman, he solicited the situation of librarian, which he retained until he retired into Wales. He appears to have possessed the powers of his mind when every thing else almost seemed to have failed him; and "during the last two years of his life," as Sir George Beaumont, who was well acquainted with Wilson, very obligingly informs me, "a feeble flash of what he once was would occasionally burst out, and his sound and unerring principles produced a considerable effect. I have," continues this gentleman, "a small picture done by him in this last stage; and although it is nearly void of form, and the trembling hand, and failing eye, visible in every touch, yet still there is a general effect, supported by breadth and hue, which a judicious imitator might transform into a Wilson."

The last years of Wilson's life were passed with his brother in Mould, and with his relation, the late Mrs. Catherine Jones, of Colo-

mondie, near the village of Llanverris, now called Loggerheads, a few miles from Mould. At the time of his residence in that neighbourhood he had nearly lost his memory, and was reduced to a state of childishness. Richard Lloyd, a servant living not many years ago at Colomondie, attended him in his last moments: he at first only complained of a cold, but upon retiring to bed almost immediately expired. His remains are interred in the churchyard at Mould, near the north door of the church: a grave-stone has been erected within these few years by Mrs. Garnons, upon which is the following inscription; viz. The Remains of Richard Wilson, Esq. Member of the Royal Academy of Artists, interred May 15th, 1782, Aged 69.

For the foregoing particulars I am chiefly indebted to Miss Garnons, a lady residing at a short distance from Colomondie, by whose polite attention they were furnished, at my particular request.

With a view, however, of obtaining some further account of this celebrated artist, of whom so little appears to be generally known*, I determined to visit the country which gave him birth, and to examine carefully the neighbourhood where Wilson not only passed his early youth, but also a considerable portion of the latter period of his life. I accordingly made a journey into that part of North Wales, and after inspecting the neat-looking town of Mould, and examining more particularly its interesting churchyard, arrived at the small village of Loggerheads.

This singular appellation owes its origin to the subject of the sign painted by Wilson for the village ale-house, and upon which are

* In a work printed some years ago may be found the following observation respecting Wilson; viz. "It appears that this artist's youth was passed in an obscurity so great, that although he has now been dead little more than one fourth of a century, his early history is already left to conjecture. Many have lamented that Reynolds had not an abler master than Hudson; but we have no certainty that Wilson had ever any master; nor have we any date to fix the commencement of his practice as a landscape painter. Barry, with a warm heart, has panegyrised his independent spirit and his genius; Fuseli, with sounder criticism, has defined his great powers; but neither have thrown a light upon his professional career. Perhaps no country is so negligent of its fame as Britain."

exhibited the heads of two very jolly-looking fellows, grinning and staring out of the picture towards the spectator: underneath are written, in very legible characters, the words, "We three Loggerheads be." The painting retains its elevated situation to this day, though, perhaps, little of the original colour may remain, it having been more than once retouched since Wilson's time. The inn-keeper, nevertheless, sets a high value upon this appendage to his house, which, no doubt, has induced many a traveller, perhaps from motives of curiosity alone, to step in, and try what sort of entertainment might be found, notwithstanding the extraordinary mode of salutation which greets him on his arrival at the door.

Adjoining to this very picturesque and interesting village, which within these few years enjoyed the tranquillity of a retired valley, and through which runs a beautiful stream, is Colomondie, the elegant seat of Miss Garnons, bequeathed to her by her aunt, Mrs. Jones. This last-mentioned lady was a relation of Wilson; and in this house, erected upon an elevated and a most lovely situation, our great artist closed his earthly career.

At Colomondie, an appellation derived from the Latin word *columba*, a dove, Wilson spent the latter part of his days, after he retired from London. Subsequently to that period, the house, to which considerable additions have been made, has undergone a thorough repair, and may be looked upon as one of the most elegant villas in this part of the country, well worthy the attention of every lover of the picturesque; indeed, almost every object that a traveller can desire to render a place delightful will be found in this most enchanting domain, — wood, water, romantic rocks, verdant lawns, and opening glades; all these various charms, whether in the distance or in the foreground, may be enjoyed with equal advantage, the most commodious walks having been made for viewing their several beauties.

Colomondie is laid out with much taste, and has been considerably improved by plantations judiciously placed, which are now of

some years' growth. The views from the house and its neighbourhood are singularly beautiful, and, as they are enriched with the most agreeable variety and undulation of ground, afford very inviting subjects for the pencil. To the contemplative mind of an artist, especially, the scenery of this place cannot fail to be heightened by the pleasing, though melancholy associations it conveys; and cold-hearted mortals must they be, who are not moved with the train of thought which it must necessarily inspire.

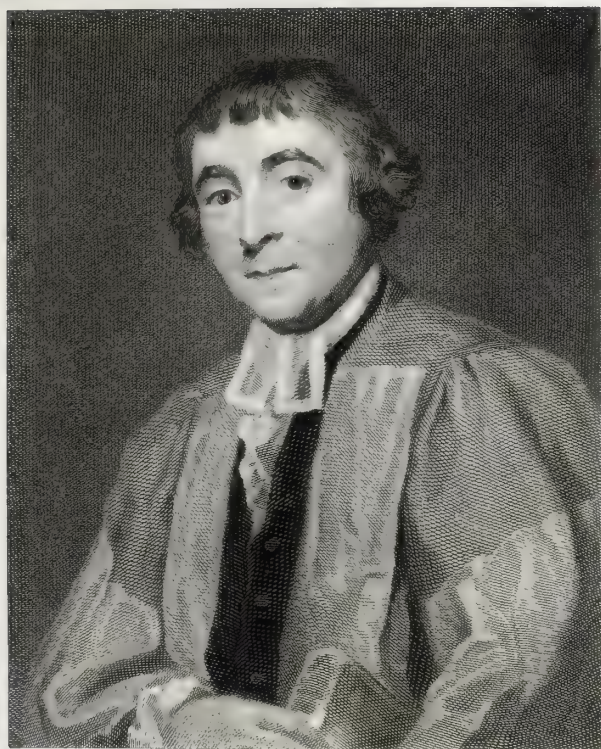
“ Ah ! who can tell how hard it is to climb
 The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar ;
 Ah ! who can tell how many a soul sublime
 Hath felt the influence of malignant star,
 And waged with fortune an eternal war ;
 Check'd by the scoff of Pride, by Envy's frown,
 And Poverty's unconquerable bar !”

BEATTIE.

The old gardener of the place, Richard Lloyd, a man very far advanced in years, remembered Wilson well, and was his attendant, as he himself informed us, when he died. According to this man's account, the finances of our artist, at the time of his decease, were not so confined as has been reported, he having succeeded to some property upon the death of his brother. It was in consequence of this acquisition, and the declining state of his health, that he determined to remove from the metropolis, and spend the remainder of his days in his native country.

At Colomondie I observed several of Wilson's pictures in an unfinished state, with two or three merely in dead colour ; of one of them the subject was the Atalanta, of which, as is well known, there is an engraving ; also a small picture, a view of the rock and river in the neighbourhood. These pictures were brought by Wilson, upon his retiring from London.

At a little distance from the house, on either side of the road, are two antient Scotch firs, extremely picturesque in their forms, said to have been favourite trees of Wilson, and which he more than



*From a Picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds
in the possession of L. J. G. G.*

once introduced into his compositions ; adjoining to them is a station commanding a fine view of the rocks above Llanverris, much admired by him.

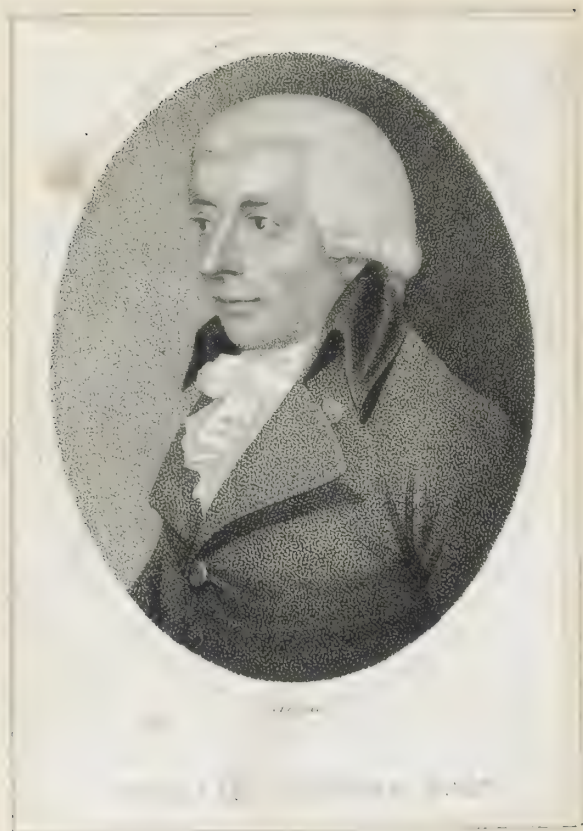
As every anecdote respecting so distinguished a character cannot but be interesting, I shall mention a circumstance relating to him, as I received it from Miss Garnons of Colomondie. In the grounds belonging to this place, at some distance from the house, was a large stone, to which Wilson, in the latter part of his life, often resorted, it being a favourite seat with this great observer of nature. During his rambles, it was frequently his custom to be attended by a Newfoundland dog ; and it so happened, that one day, accompanied by his faithful companion, the aged painter slipped from the stone upon which he had been seated, and unable to recover himself, would, in all likelihood, have perished on the spot, had not timely assistance arrived. The sagacious animal, seeing the situation of his master, ran howling to the house, and soliciting the attention of the servants with significant looks, pulling at the same time the skirts of their clothes with his teeth, directed them to the spot, and thus was the means of rescuing his helpless master from a situation of considerable danger.

In an upper room in the house at Colomondie, is the bed on which Wilson breathed his last. In showing this apartment, old Richard Lloyd related to us how some painter, upon being told of the circumstance, stretched himself upon the bed, in order that he might be able to say, he had lain where this great artist had terminated his life ; so deep was the veneration he entertained for this justly celebrated painter.

Colomondie is in Denbighshire, on the borders of Flintshire, and not far removed from the turnpike road, leading from Chester to Ruthin, which passes through the adjoining village of Llanverris, or, as it is now almost universally called, Loggerheads. The rural simplicity and quiet seclusion which this spot formerly enjoyed, have of late years undergone a very sensible change ; the road through it having become the

daily route of several stage-coaches and other vehicles, little consistent with ideas of tranquillity and repose. In a commercial point of view, this may be well ; but to the lover of the picturesque, travelling for no other end than the search after enjoyment in the delightful scenery with which this interesting country abounds, such objects come upon him with an intrusion so discordant with the feelings of his heart, that they produce a shock almost as violent and offensive as that which the harsh sound of an instrument out of tune, in a full orchestra, does to the ear of an intent connoisseur.

In passing through this neighbourhood on a former occasion, while making a tour in North Wales, I had been much struck with its surrounding scenery, and with the romantic beauty of this village, without however at that time having the most distant idea, that circumstances of any material interest were connected with it, beyond those presented to the eye in the picturesque accompaniments of the place. So much indeed was my attention excited by the choice combination which these afforded, that I very well remember having ordered the carriage to stop, for the sole purpose of taking a sketch, by way of having a memorandum of the spot ; a practice which will be found the most useful and interesting, as enabling the tourist at all times to retain a much more faithful and accurate recollection of a place, than any written account, let the description of it be ever so minute or circumstantial. Such a memorandum indeed, though executed in the most slight or imperfect manner, sets at once before the mind, as it were, not only the more striking features of the scenery, but likewise the very persons who accompanied us, as well as every particular occurrence which took place at the time. So much does this appear to be the fact, that I will even go further, and do not hesitate to give it as my belief, that the impression made upon the imagination by the recollection of such particulars, thus brought into contemplation, is not unfrequently productive of a higher degree of interest than that which even the realities themselves had excited.



That this is actually the case, the writer has in numberless instances experienced in a remarkable degree, even though many years had elapsed from the time of making such memoranda. On the other hand, it will be invariably found that notes and observations taken with the pen, as the journal of the tourist is usually made, bear no proportion in the interest which they create at any subsequent period, to the pleasure and the accuracy of detail, which those made with the pencil never fail to produce.

Having for a considerable number of years practised each of these modes of making memoranda, the author is enabled to speak with a greater degree of confidence on so important a subject. What, indeed, is not of real and very substantial consequence too, may it be demanded, which proves an addition, be it ever so small, to the little sum of human happiness, or that tends to alleviate the anxieties and the misfortunes of life, as this very innocent and amusing pastime, so valuable and inviting to the lover of nature, most unquestionably is able to do ?

“ O Nature, how in every charm supreme !
 Whose votaries feast on raptures ever new !
 O for the voice and fire of seraphim,
 To sing thy glories with devotion due !”

BEATTIE.

There are few persons, perhaps, let their minds be ever so devoid of sensibility or refinement, who, at least on some occasions, are not led to the contemplation of serious thought, by the grand and striking appearance which a fine extensive prospect affords ; or by the rich painting of the clouds, when gilded by the setting sun, on a calm and tranquil summer's evening ; for the love of nature is, in some degree, inherent in us all, it

“ Is an ingredient in the compound man,
 Infused at the creation of the kind.”

COWPER.

The seeds of taste, indeed, are continually found to exist in minds, in which it is impossible to trace them to any hand but that of nature.

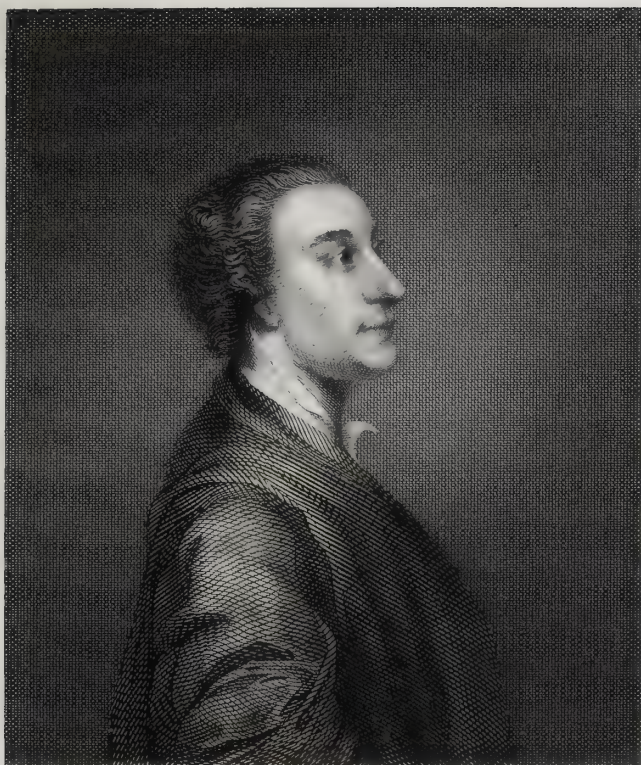
“ Ask the swain
 Who journeys homeward from a summer day’s
 Long labour, why, forgetful of his toils
 And due repose, he loiters to behold
 The sunshine gleaming, as thro’ amber clouds,
 O’er all the western sky ; full soon, I ween,
 His rude expression and untutor’d airs,
 Beyond the power of language, will unfold
 The form of beauty smiling at his heart.”

AKENSIDE.

The advantages, however, to be derived from the study of nature, the power of catching and representing her loveliest features, and the pleasure which never fails to accompany it, cannot be experienced, except by due cultivation and studious attention ; and in this, as in every other science, there is no “royal road” to attainment.

Let me, therefore, strongly recommend every one whose object in travelling is to explore the beauties of nature, to be at the pains of obtaining, at least, some slight degree of skill in this most agreeable and interesting art. Thus furnished, he will find the pleasure of his journey increased in a tenfold degree ; besides which, the recurrence, at some future period, to a series of memoranda so made, is like travelling the country over again, with the additional advantage of being exempted from the fatigue or inconvenience, which in his journey he may perhaps have experienced.

Though the satisfaction arising from the contemplation of sketches is certainly of the most interesting kind, there is another advantage of still higher value, which necessarily follows the study of the art here recommended, and which will be found to be continually increasing, exactly in proportion to our attainments therein. By drawing, we are not only enabled to carry away with us the very best possible memorial of the scenery we admire, but the greater our knowledge of, and the more extensive our acquaintance with, the principles of landscape painting, the greater are the number of beauties we are able to discover in the scenery before us ; which develop themselves gradually, in precisely the degree in which we have acquired the faculty to discover them ; such as effects of light and shade, combinations of form and colour, contrasts, &c.





GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL Esq.

“It is true,” observes a writer upon this subject, “other men may see as well as a painter, but not with such eyes ; a man is taught to see as well as to dance, and the beauties of nature open themselves to our sight by little and little, after a long practice in the art of seeing. A judicious well-instructed eye sees a wonderful beauty in shapes and colours of the commonest things, and what are comparatively inconsiderable ; but the sky alone is capable of giving a degree of pleasure sufficient to balance against a great many of the inconveniences and miseries of life.”

The person who has acquired a knowledge in this delightful art, has this further advantage, he not only sees beauties in pictures and drawings, which to common eyes are invisible ; he learns, by these, to see such in nature, in the exquisite forms and colours, the fine effects of light, shadows, and reflections, which in her are always to be found, and from whence he has a pleasure which, otherwise, he could never have had, and which none, with untaught eyes, can possibly discover ; he has a constant pleasure of this kind, even in things the most familiar to us, so that what people usually look upon with the utmost indifference, creates great delight in his mind.

The noblest works of Raffaelle, the most ravishing music of Handel, the masterly beauties of Milton, must be understood, before they can be appreciated ; nor can the beautiful works of the great Author of nature be fully discerned by uncultivated eyes.

We may, indeed, very fairly say of the beauties of nature, in as far as relates to the education of the eye, if such an expression may be allowed, what Sir Joshua Reynolds has said concerning those of art : “I am clearly of opinion that a relish for the higher excellencies of art, is an acquired taste, which no man ever possessed without long cultivation, and great labour and attention.”

Thus it evidently appears that these two separate studies of painting and of nature, are found mutually to contribute to the assistance of each other ; and, at the same time, to empower their followers to discern beauties in both, which, taken separately, they would be quite incapable of discovering in either.

“ Alterius sic
Altera poscit opem res, et conjurat amicè.”*

HORACE.

To return, however, to the subject we were considering, viz. the interesting village of Llanverris. On the occasion alluded to, having finished my sketch, I enquired of a countryman, who happened to be passing at the time, the name of the village before us, and, as it may be supposed, was somewhat surprised by his answering in a broad, blunt tone of voice, and without the least apparent intention of passing a joke, “ Loggerheads.”

Though aware that Welsh was the language then generally spoken, the term seemed so remarkable, that I was induced to repeat my question. Still, the answer was precisely the same ; I, therefore, without further hesitation, inscribed at the foot of my drawing, notwithstanding the oddity of such a title, in plain English, *Loggerheads* ; nor did I, until a considerable time afterwards, find out the real meaning of the word, always supposing that it must have been some Welsh appellation, assimilating in sound with our own language, and which at the time appeared a very curious and laughable coincidence of terms.

Wilson appears to have been partial to his native country, and is known to have declared that, in his opinion, the scenery of Wales afforded every requisite for a landscape painter, whether in the sublime, or in the pastoral representations of nature. In the possession of Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, Bart., are several pictures painted by Wilson, representing well known places in that country ; there are also six views in Wales, engraved from paintings by him.

In person, Wilson was somewhat above the middle size, of robust make, and rather corpulent, his head, at the same time, being large in proportion to the rest of his figure. During the latter years of his life, his face became red, and was covered with blotches ; he had a remarkably large nose, and was much displeased if any one appeared to observe it. This, perhaps, may be attributed, in a certain degree,

* “ But mutually they need each other’s help.” ROSCOMMON.

European Magazine.



Engraved by cord.

JAMES NORTHCOTE ESQ.^R.R.A.

Published by J. Gower, Cornhill, March, 1795.

to his fondness for a pot of porter, to which it was his custom not unfrequently to resort, and which at all times he preferred to the more expensive beverage of wine, even though it might be placed before him. He wore a wig tied or plaited behind into a knocker or club, and a triangular cocked hat, according to the costume of the time.

Depression and mortification, awakened by neglect, it may naturally be supposed, could not fail to operate severely upon such a mind as Wilson's, in which that sensibility so necessarily allied to a refinement of taste, must have predominated in a very high degree; the consequence of this was, that he became negligent of himself, both in person and manners. Mr. Northcote's impression of Wilson was, as the author has been credibly informed, "that his mind was as refined and intelligent as his person and manners were coarse and repulsive; and that discernment and familiarity with him were necessary to discover the unpolished jewel beneath its ferruginous coat." He appears, indeed, to have been much respected, and highly esteemed by those who were acquainted with his real nature and disposition. The late Mr. Stowers, of Charter-house Square, an amateur pupil and companion of Wilson, is well known to have entertained the very highest esteem for the man, no less than admiration of his works. The present Mr. Stowers, who has obligingly furnished this information, says, that he has often heard his father affirm he regarded Wilson as a very honourable character, and delighted much in his blunt honesty, and intelligence of conversation. Mr. S. distinctly remembers, that his father often repeated conversations of his with Wilson, in which the painter would lament the destiny which had denied him the initiation into some trade, or profession, in which he might have contributed that to the wants of society, which would have supplied the comforts and enjoyments of life to himself, instead of devoting him to an art which, while it fosters the sensibilities of our nature, does not always secure to the artist the remuneration of his anxious endeavours.

With such sentiments, nevertheless, prompted as they must too surely have been by spleen and disappointment, there cannot re-

main a doubt but that Wilson was influenced by motives of higher consideration, since, notwithstanding his necessities, no hope of rewards could ever tempt him to forsake his art, or forego the consciousness of meriting the approbation of his fellow minds. His address, according to the report of one who was well acquainted with him, was rather pleasing, and he made no mystery of his manner of painting; a liberality, it is to be feared, not always so conspicuous in the conduct of the artist. His method appears to have been slow and full of reflection, especially in finishing his pictures, frequently receding from them, in order to consider more advantageously their effect.



Engraved by J. H. P. from a drawing by J. P. P.

RICHMOND HILL,
Surrey.

CHAP. II.

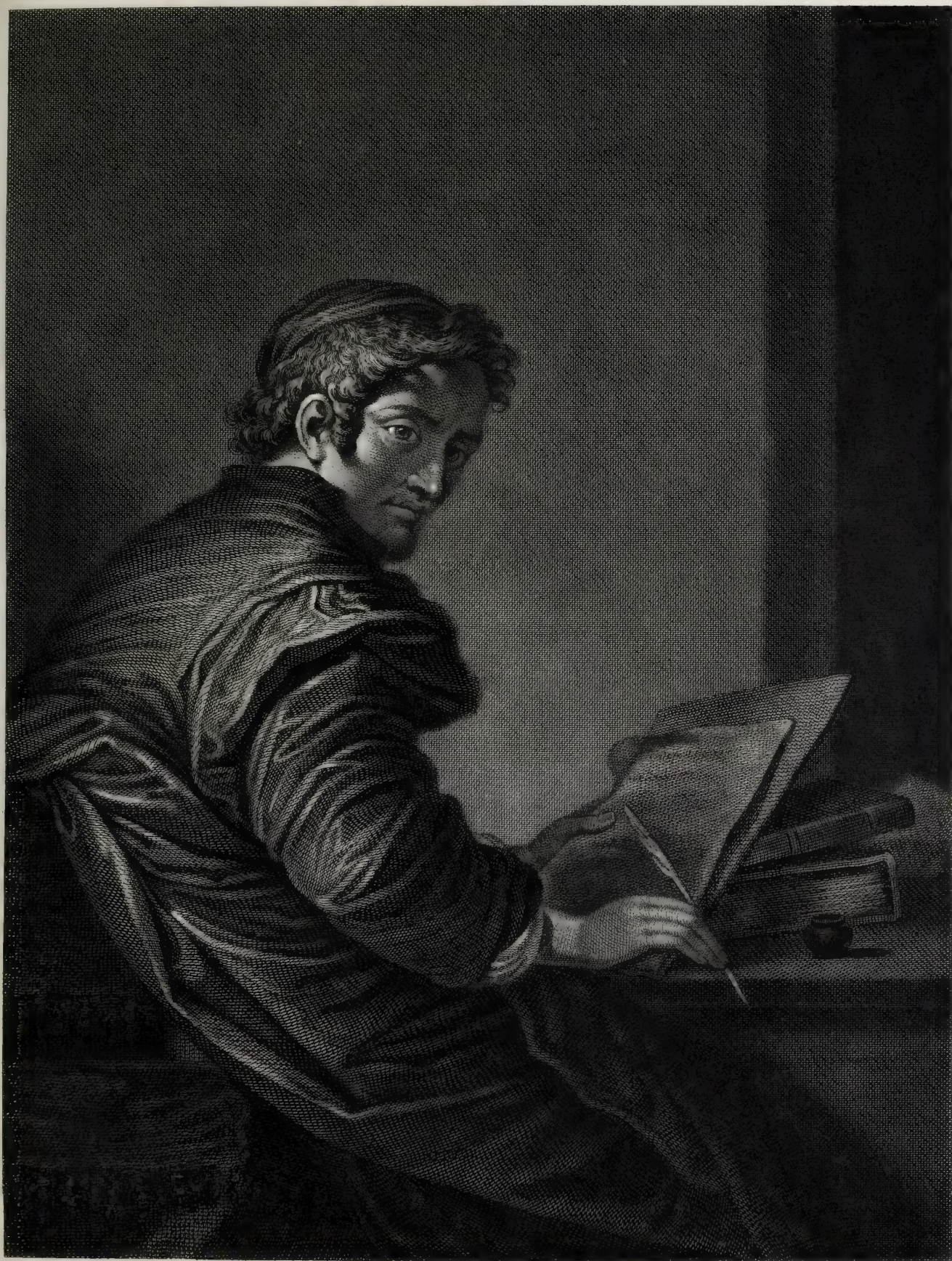
ANECDOTES OF WILSON. — VIEW FROM RICHMOND HILL. — GILPIN. — WRIGHT OF DERBY. — CASCADE OF TERNI. — HAMPSTEAD HEATH. — FIGURES IN WILSON'S LANDSCAPES. — CRITICS. — REMARK OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. — REASONS WHICH INDUCED WILSON TO REPEAT HIS SUBJECTS. — UNFAIR INFERENCE DEDUCED FROM THIS CIRCUMSTANCE. — THE MERIT OF HIS PAINTINGS NOT UNDERSTOOD IN HIS DAY. — CONSEQUENT NEGLECT OF THE ARTIST.

MR. PRICE, in his very interesting work on the Picturesque, mentions the following story relating to Wilson; a singular trait, and which evinces, in a high degree, how much the mind of this painter was at all times bent upon the contemplation of his art, and how entirely his view of nature was made subservient to it. “Sir Joshua Reynolds,” says Mr. Price, “told me that when he and Wilson the landscape painter were looking at the view from Richmond terrace, Wilson was pointing out some particular part, and in order to direct his eye to it, ‘There,’ said he, ‘near those houses, — there, where the *figures* are.’ ‘Though a painter,’ said Sir Joshua, ‘I was puzzled; I thought he meant statues, and was looking upon the tops of the houses, for I did not at first conceive that the men and women we plainly saw walking about were, by him, only thought of as figures in the landscape.’”

It is somewhat remarkable, that although the subject of which Mr. Price treats so much at length has very frequently, as might be expected, a reference to pictures, and especially to landscape painting, this should be the only instance in which he has introduced the name of Wilson (that master of the picturesque) into his work, and that, too, merely in a note at the foot of the page! This observation applies still more forcibly to Mr. Gilpin, the ingenious author of essays, together with other publications relating to the subject of art, and landscape scenery in particular, of which he appears to be

an enthusiastic admirer, whether in nature or on canvass. The author has in vain looked through the volumes of this writer for even a hint at our countryman, Wilson. Upon the merits of Claude, they both, with equal freedom, offer their sentiments, whether of censure or applause, and the landscapes of Gaspar, Titian, and Salvator, are continually the subjects of their comparison with the scenery which nature presents to their view ; while the sublime productions of Wilson seem either to have escaped their notice altogether, or to have been deemed unworthy of their regard. To what, may it be asked, are we to attribute this seeming neglect ? The poet has told us : he had not been “ dead a hundred years.”

In a small publication, printed at Manchester, entitled “ Carey’s Thoughts,” may be found the following anecdotes. “ Wilson,” says the author, “ was liberal to his brother artists, and revered the powers of Wright of Derby highly, with whom he was intimate. The latter artist estimated highly the abilities of Wilson, and whenever he was in London, rarely failed to visit his great, but amicable rival. In conversing familiarly one day, upon the subject of their art, Wright proposed to exchange one of his pictures for one of Wilson’s ; the latter assented with the easy consciousness of his own particular excellence, as distinguished from the particular excellence of his friend ; ‘ With all my heart, Wright,—I’ll give you *air*, and you’ll give me *fire*.’—It is known that in aërial effect Wilson considered himself above every rival ; and the proposal of Wright may be supposed to imply, on his part, an ingenuous acknowledgment of Wilson’s superiority in this particular. I have never heard that Wilson imitated Wright, but we know that Wright, avowedly, imitated Wilson ; and, in such instances, reached his glow and aërial effect to admiration.” In the publication last mentioned, it is also related, as from unquestionable authority, that when Wilson was painting the Ceyx and Alcyone, he consulted the broken surface, and rich hues of a large decayed cheese, for ideas of form and colour. It is said, also, that Gainsborough modelled a landscape of moss, clay, stones, pieces of coal and tin, from which he fancied that he derived assistance.





A late traveller, in his description of the waterfall of Terni, in Italy, mentions the following anecdote of Wilson. "The cascade," he observes, "has often been described, but, perhaps, no description can give a more lively idea of the impression which the first sight of it makes upon the spectator, than the exclamation of Wilson the painter, overheard by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who happened to be on the spot. Wilson stood for a moment in speechless admiration, and then broke out with, 'Well done water, by G—!'" *

One day, while Wilson was sketching on Hampstead Heath, at rather a late hour in the afternoon, he was accosted by a couple of fellows of very suspicious appearance, who, in a rough and threatening manner, asked him what he was about; to this demand Wilson, who had little doubt of their intention of robbing him, very coolly replied, that he was making drawings for the support of his wife and family. "And how much," demanded one of the men, "can you get for such drawings?"—"I sell them at a shilling a piece," answered Wilson.—This reply, from a person having but a mean appearance, and who, at the best of times, was but shabbily dressed, induced the footpads to walk away, without further molestation. Thus, the artist, by his presence of mind, and ingenuity, saved himself from what might possibly, under other circumstances, have proved to him a very serious affair.

Respecting the palette, and the process adopted by Wilson, some particulars have been communicated to me by a friend, derived, as he informs me, from a very authentic source. According to this statement, the colours used by Wilson were white, Naples yellow, vermilion, light ochre, brown ochre, dark or Roman ochre, lake, yellow lake, lamp black, Prussian blue, ultramarine, burnt terra di Sienna.

Wilson dead-coloured in a very broad simple manner, giving a faint idea of the effect and colour intended, but without any very bright light or strong dark; quite flat, and no handling whatever; the shadows on the foreground thin and clear; air tint prevailing.

* Diary of an Invalid.

When perfectly dry, he went over it a second time, heightening every part with colour, and deepening the shadows, but still brown, free, loose, and flat, and left in a state for finishing ; the half tints laid in, without high lights. The third time, he altered what was necessary in the masses of tint, adding all the necessary sharpness and handling to the different objects, and then gave the finish to his picture.

His great care was to bring up all the parts of his picture together, and not to finish one part before another, so that his picture should not, as the painters term it, run away with him, and that while working in one part, he should introduce that colour into other parts where it suited, or to lower the tone fit to make it suit, that the different parts might keep company with each other.

His air tint was blue, burnt ochre, and light red, sometimes a little vermilion, and, in other cases, he made his air tint of the lakes and blue ; with the lakes he made his glazing tints on the foreground very rich and warm, and of their full force ; but all this was moderated by the tints which he laid on the glazings. If any part was hard, he restored it by scumbling the air tint, suited to the distance of the part, over it, and then added the finishing touches, and sharpness, to prevent its being smoky or mealy. A *magylph*, or majellup, of linseed oil and mastic varnish, in which the latter predominated, was his usual vehicle, and an oyster-shell served him to contain it. He dead-coloured with Prussian blue, but always finished the sky and distance with ultramarine ; for it was his opinion that no other blue could give the beautiful effect of air.

For the chief of the above particulars, respecting the colours and the process used by Wilson, I stand indebted to my much valued friend and fellow-traveller, Sir William Pilkington, Bart., a lover of art, possessing at the same time refinement of taste and a practical knowledge such as few amateurs can boast. To him they were communicated by a gentleman who received them from the late Mr. Farrington, a pupil of Wilson, — an authority not to be disputed.

On various occasions, Wilson did not scruple to take advantage of the talents of Mortimer, and, sometimes, of Hayman, for the intro-



duction of his figures. The pictures of Meleager and Atalanta, of Apollo and the Seasons, and several others, furnish examples of this. Though such a practice, with a landscape painter, is by no means unusual, I have nevertheless heard it asserted by some critics, judging no doubt from this circumstance, that Wilson was unequal to this, so essential a part of his art, being, say they, (to use an expression at once the most general and sweeping,) a very indifferent painter of figures; and that, moreover, it was for this reason, that, in his best pictures, we so often find them introduced by the hand of some other artist. Now, although such has been the case, in various instances, still, I will venture to maintain, that so far from this having been a general practice with our artist, he, on the contrary, almost always introduced the figures himself. The greater part of Wilson's pictures (and I have had opportunity of inspecting a vast number of his works) bear ample testimony to this; carrying, in the face of them, if one may so say, the most evident proofs that these important additions were executed by the self-same hand as that by which the rest of the picture had been painted. For, so judiciously are they, as it were, fitted to, and so singularly in unison do they seem to be with, the rest of the composition, that like the necessity of the key-stone to the finish of the arch, their structure could scarcely have been rendered so complete in any other way.

The true value of a figure in landscape, does not, as it is well known, consist solely in the mere correctness of the drawing, the justness of the action, or the propriety of the character in which it may have been portrayed, but demands, in a well-ordered composition, considerations of much higher import; and the necessity that such an accompaniment be painted with an eye to the harmony and general effect of the whole, must render it, at all times, an extremely difficult matter for any one, except the painter of the landscape himself, to form a correct judgment as to its fitness and propriety in these respects.

When we observe the very admirable manner in which the figures in Wilson's landscapes are introduced, (perhaps no painter ever had

a superior judgment in this particular,) and how much they tend, almost invariably, to heighten and set off the effect of the whole, forming, as they generally do, a part, and that often a very essential part, of the composition itself, we shall have the greatest reason to conclude that they must have been, with the exception of some few, the production of no one but the artist himself; possessed, as he must have been, of a far greater degree of feeling for the subject of his own individual choice, and a much larger share of scientific knowledge relating thereto, than could possibly be found in any other person; for in his own individual mind alone must have been previously formed each separate member of the scene, whether relating to the primary arrangement, or to the completion of that machinery which his own imagination had conceived.

From the above considerations, it must follow, that no other painter could possess similar qualifications, which belong exclusively to the inventor of the design, and without which it is scarcely possible that there should be "that union between the conceptions of the mind and the operations of the hand, which," as Mr. Payne Knight observes, "constitutes superior merit."*

Those acquainted with the art, know perfectly well of what importance the smallest piece of local colour is, when judiciously introduced into the drapery of a figure or other accompaniment, and how much the whole tone and appearance, even of the picture, may be changed by so apparently trifling a matter; in which particular part, however, or in what peculiar manner this may be done with the greatest effect and advantage to the whole, it is the discriminating eye, and the fine feeling of the experienced artist alone, which can, with any degree of certainty, determine.

That the great masters of former times did frequently avail themselves of the aid of others, for the insertion of figures into their landscapes, there cannot be a doubt; this, the pictures of Wynants, Hobbima, Artois, and many others, sufficiently testify: such a circum-

* Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste, by R. P. Knight.



RICHARD PAYNE KNIGHT, ESQ. F.R.S. & S.A.

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stance, however, cannot be any argument against the opinion advanced; many of these painters having been, it is well known, incapable themselves of introducing the figures required; while it appears to me, that in scarcely any of their pictures do these objects, however excellent and appropriate they may be, form so decided, and at the same time so materially connecting a feature, either in relation to the tone of colour, the *chiaro-oscuro*, or the composition, altogether, as they do, almost universally, in the productions of our countryman.

If, therefore, Wilson did sometimes allow the introduction of a group by a strange hand, we can have no ground for supposing that this arose from deficiency on his part, more particularly as we know him to have gone through the regular study of the academy figure, and to have prepared himself, at his first setting out, for the pursuit of figure painting only; and in his best and more finished productions, sufficient examples are not wanting, to prove most satisfactorily, that he was perfectly able, not only to colour, but to draw, in a manner the most correct, these interesting accompaniments; as several of the pictures by him, in my own collection, bear evident proof, the different groups of figures with which they are embellished being unobjectionable, considered in every point of view.

It must, however, be confessed, that in some instances, and more particularly in those pictures painted during the latter period of his life, and which appear to have been done hastily, there may be observed an indecision and incorrectness in the drawing of the figures, offensive to the eye of cold criticism; but this has been, in by far the greater number of instances, so amply compensated by the other excellencies, which these accompaniments are almost always found to possess, the nature and value of which the writer has endeavoured to point out, that no one, bringing with him a mind unbiassed by prejudice, can for a single moment suffer his enjoyment to be disturbed, by considerations of a nature so very trivial and subordinate.

To quarrel with Wilson's pictures because we cannot discover in

them that perfection which never yet was found in the productions of man, is, surely, most unreasonable and absurd. "There never was," as it has been well observed by a very intelligent writer, "a picture in the world without some faults, and very rarely is there one to be found, which is not notoriously defective in some of the parts of painting. In judging of its goodness as a connoisseur, one should pronounce it such, in proportion to the number of good qualities it has, and their degrees of goodness. I will add, as a philosopher, one should consider the excellence we see, and enjoy that, as being all belonging to it; no more regretting what it has not, or thinking of it, so as to diminish our pleasure in that it has, than we do the want of taste in a rose, speech in a picture of Van Dyk, or life in one of Raffaele."

Unfortunately, however, for the artist, the generality of spectators are oftentimes more disposed to look out for faults than for excellencies, in their examination of his work, and do not hesitate very frequently to set down, as almost unworthy of their regard, many a valuable production of art, abounding, perhaps, with beauties of the very first order, because, forsooth, there may have been some error or deficiency in one particular part; a part, too, not unlikely, in the opinion of the artist himself, of very inferior moment, his performance considered *as a whole*, in which point of view alone, let it be remembered, every judicious observer will, according to Sir Joshua Reynolds, consider its chief merit to consist.

The words of this able instructor cannot be too often repeated, and no where can they be more strictly applicable, than to the productions of the master whose works we are considering; I may, therefore, be induced, on more occasions than one, to take advantage of authority so conclusive, and now so universally received.

For besides the fault above mentioned, other charges (which upon examination, however, will be found to stand upon no better grounds,) have been brought against our artist; every one of which, according to my humble opinion, will very quickly be seen to vanish from before us, provided always, that they be suffered to obtain a fair and



RAPHAËL SANZIUS de VRBINO.

candid examination, agreeable to the rules and the principles which this great man has laid down.

“The skill of the genuine landscape painter,” says Sir Joshua, in his lectures to the students of the Royal Academy, “will be displayed in showing *the general effect*, and that genius which consists in the power of expressing that which employs his pencil, *as a whole*, so that the power of the whole may take possession of the mind, and, for a while, suspend the consideration of the subordinate beauties or defects.”

But the misfortune is, as has been remarked, there are persons who, instead of giving themselves up to the enjoyment which the picture, if considered *as a whole*, would most probably afford, do often in their anxiety to exhibit some fancied acuteness and critical acumen, which they are desirous of being thought to possess, destroy at once all such agreeable feelings; and pouncing, as it were, upon some poor unlucky figure, or other subordinate appendage, they not unfrequently condemn, without mercy, the whole performance.

The sentiments of an author in a recent publication, although upon a different subject, are equally applicable to the art we are considering, as they may, indeed, be said to be to the works of any art whatever. “I am willing to admit,” observes this judicious writer, “that a real blemish may be found in the finest passages, as a speckle may be found in the finest face; and I am aware that it is those blemishes that give critics and abstract reasoners an opportunity of arguing with such speciousness against the beauty of some of the finest passages in writing. But it is futile, and beneath the dignity of true criticism, to catch at these minor faults; for, as Dryden happily expresses it,

‘Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow;
He who would search for pearls must dive below.’”*

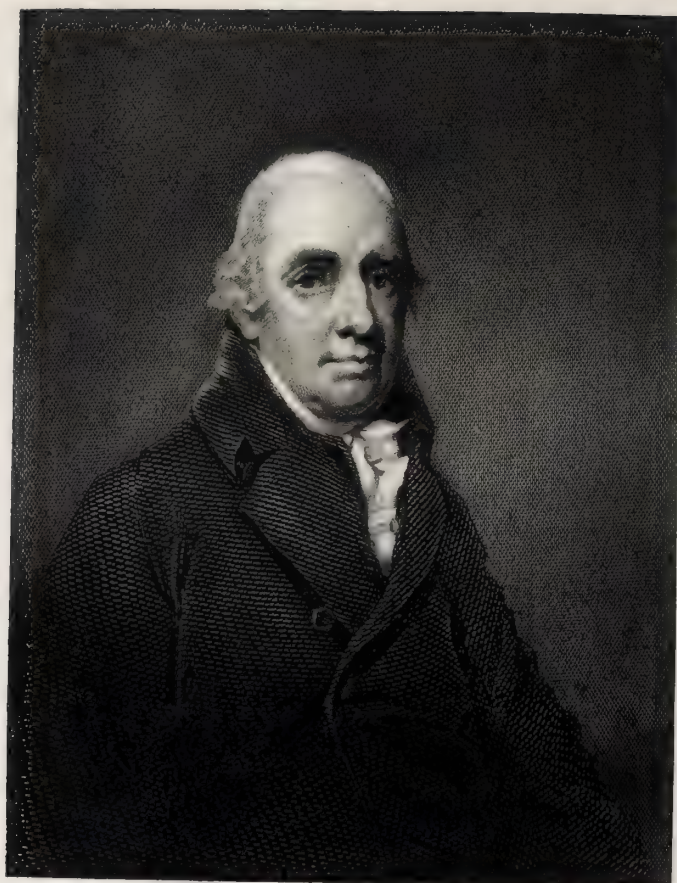
Respecting this class of connoisseurs, who are to be found on all sides, an observation so much in point lately occurred to the author’s

* A Critical Dissertation on the Nature and Principles of Taste, by M. Mc Dermott, 1822.

notice, that he cannot resist laying it before the reader, as a confirmation of the opinion which has been delivered. "I have observed," says Mr. Webb, in the preface to his *Inquiry into the Beauties of Painting*, "many to look at pictures, with no other view than to show their acuteness in detecting little errors in drawing, or lapses of the pencil; these do not study painting to become knowing, but to appear so. But let them reflect, that there is more true taste in drawing forth one latent beauty, than in observing a hundred obvious imperfections; the first proves that our spirit co-operates with that of the artist; the second shows nothing more than that we have eyes, and that we use them to little purpose."* Now a true and genuine taste manifests itself in quite a different manner; and "it is particularly worthy of observation," as one of the most learned writers of the day has remarked, "that it is always more strongly disposed to the enjoyment of *beauties*, than to the detection of *blemishes*. It is indeed by a quick and lively perception of the former, accompanied with a spirit of candour and indulgence towards the latter, that its existence in the mind of any individual is most unquestionably marked. It is this perception which can alone evince that sensibility of temperament, of which a certain proportion, although it does not itself constitute taste, is nevertheless the first, and most essential element in its composition; while it evinces, at the same time, those habits of critical observation and cool reflection, which allowing no impression, how slight soever, to pass unnoticed, seem to awaken a new sense of beauty, and to *create* that delicacy of feeling which they only *disclose*.

"While this cultivated sensibility," continues the same philosophic observer of the human mind, "enlarges so widely to the man who possesses it the pleasures of taste, it has a tendency, wherever it is gratified and delighted in a high degree, to avert his critical eye from blemishes and imperfections; not because he is unable to remark them, but because he can appreciate the merits by which they

* *Inquiry into the Beauties of Painting*, by Daniel Webb, Esq.



DAVID STEWART ESQ F.R.S. LONDON & EDINBURGH &c.

David Stewart.

are redeemed, and loves to enjoy the beauties in which they are lost. A taste thus awake to the beautiful, seizes on every touch of genius with the sympathy of kindred affection, and in the secret consciousness of a congenial inspiration, shares, in some measure, the triumph of the artist. The faults which have escaped him it views with the partiality of friendship, and willingly abandons the censorial office to those who exult in the errors of superior minds as their appropriate and easy prey."*

Could the like liberal sentiments, and the same generous feelings, be allowed to influence the minds as well as the hearts of our connoisseurs, in their examination of Wilson's pictures, we should hear not one word more about such trifling drawbacks to the capability and the excellence of our artist.

There is, however, another class of critics of a much more good-natured sort, who, instead of seeking to attract notice by their discovery of blemishes, take the opposite side, and are for ever lavish of, and extravagant in, their praise. The motive, in both, is nearly the same, their remarks being equally prompted by the desire of exhibiting that acuteness of discernment of which they would have it believed they stand pre-eminently possessed. These, in their extraordinary anxiety to attribute every kind of excellence to some favourite artist, will often discover numberless beauties belonging to his work, and give him credit for ideas and intentions in the execution of it, not one of which, very probably, ever entered his head. Such observations are oftentimes amusing enough, and are, every now and then, carried to an almost ridiculous extent.

The wonderful flippancy with which these connoisseurs run through the whole vocabulary of taste, invention, design, *claro-oscuro*, &c. is quite surprising, and upon which they talk with the same ease as smooth stones, which children call *ducks and drakes*, skim the surface of the water without entering the mass. They argue, it is true, with very considerable warmth, but without attempting to encroach

* Philosophical Essays, by Dugald Stewart.

on the province of reason ; sprightliness and animation fill up the void of sense ; and the quickness of transition from one department of the art to another, abundantly supplies, in at least their own estimation, the want of connection in any. Such critics are ever anxious to describe, not so much what they see or feel, as what they think may best become their pretensions to discover, and their eloquence to express.

An example of this kind of cleverness is mentioned in the work of a late writer, who, in speaking of the celebrated picture of St. Pietro Martire, by Titian, remarks, that “ the large trees which are here introduced are plainly distinguished from each other by the different manner with which the branches shoot from their trunks, as well as by their different foliage ; and the weeds, in the foreground, are varied in the same manner, just as much as variety requires, and no more. When Algarotti, speaking of this picture, praises it for the minute discrimination of the leaves and plants, even, as he says, to excite the admiration of a botanist, his intention was, undoubtedly, to give praise, even at the expense of truth ; for he must have known that this is not the character of the picture : but connoisseurs will always find in pictures what they think they ought to find ; he was not aware that he was giving a description injurious to the reputation of Titian.”*

There are, however, other observations respecting certain figures introduced by Wilson, which demand a more attentive consideration, they having been animadverted upon by an authority which carries with it too much weight, not to have a material influence upon the minds of those who happen to peruse them ; so long, at least, as they remain unacquainted with the peculiar circumstances by which, as we are led to believe, they have in some degree been unfortunately suggested. The author alludes to the strictures passed upon Wilson's picture of Niobe, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his fourteenth discourse to the Royal Academy.

* Life of Raphael Da Urbino, by the author of the Life of Michael Angelo.

In Mr. Edwards's *Anecdotes of Painters*, this subject appears to have been handled with much judgment and impartiality ; indeed the more we enquire into the history, and the circumstances connected with the career of this unfortunate artist, the more reason we find for thinking him to have been hardly used ; and are, consequently, disposed to commiserate, rather than to blame, the imperfections to which, it cannot be denied, his behaviour, especially during the latter period of his life, appears to have been in some degree liable.

That Sir Joshua and Wilson were not upon amicable terms, is a circumstance too generally known to admit of a doubt ; but that a person with the kind feeling and the liberal sentiments which the President is known to have possessed, should, intentionally, wound the reputation of a brother artist, and especially of one who was laid in his grave, is what we can scarcely bring ourselves to believe. As it is the writer's intention to revert to this subject at a subsequent period, we will, for the present, wave any further consideration of it, and proceed to the question immediately before us.

"We will take notice," says Mr. Edwards, "of a censure which has been passed upon one of Wilson's principal works, by an artist whose abilities and reputation command respect, though they cannot enforce our implicit assent to his opinion ; I mean Sir Joshua Reynolds, who, in one of his discourses, passed some strictures upon Wilson's picture of Niobe, which did not coincide with the sentiments of those who then heard or who since perused them.

"But in order to judge how far those strictures were just or otherwise, and whether the disapprobation with which they were received was or was not well founded, they are here presented to the reader.

"Our ingenious academician, Wilson, has, I fear, been guilty, like many of his predecessors, of introducing gods and goddesses, ideal beings, into scenes which were by no means prepared to receive such personages. His landscapes were in reality too near common nature to admit supernatural objects. In consequence of this mistake, in a very admirable picture of a storm, which I have seen of his hand, many figures are introduced in the foreground, some in apparent dis-

tress, and some struck dead, as a spectator would naturally suppose, by the lightning, had not the painter injudiciously (as I think) rather chosen that their death should be imputed to a little Apollo, who appears in the sky with his bent bow, and that those figures should be considered as the children of Niobe.

“‘To manage a subject of this kind, a peculiar style of art is required, and it can only be done without impropriety, or even without ridicule, when we adapt the character of the landscape, and that too in all its parts, to the historical or poetical representation.

“‘This is a very difficult adventure, and it requires a mind thrown back two thousand years, and, as it were, naturalised in antiquity, like that of Nicolo Poussin, to achieve it.

“‘In the picture alluded to, the first idea that presents itself is that of wonder, in seeing a figure in so uncommon a situation as that in which the Apollo is placed, for the clouds on which he kneels have not the appearance of being able to support him; they have neither the substance nor the form fit for the receptacle of a human figure, and they do not possess in any respect that romantic character which is appropriated to such a subject, and which alone can harmonise with poetical stories.’

“Sir Joshua then observes, that ‘the Dutch and Flemish style of landscape, not even excepting those of Rubens, is unfit for poetical subjects; but to explain in what this inaptitude consists, or to point out all the circumstances that give nobleness, grandeur, and the poetic character to style in landscape, would require a long discourse of itself, and the end would be then, perhaps, but imperfectly attained.’* ”

“Though we may allow the foregoing observations,” says Mr. Edwards, “to be perfectly just when taken in a general sense, yet when they are applied to Wilson’s picture of Niobe in *particular*, they certainly must be considered as forced, and as the effect of petulant pique, rather than the correction of just criticism.

* This discourse was delivered December 10th, 1788, soon after the death of Gainsborough, and was the last but one delivered by the President.





“This assertion is justified by the following inaccuracy. It is asserted, that Wilson's pictures are ‘too near common nature to admit supernatural objects;’ but the question here does not concern his other pictures, but relates to that of Niobe only, and, consequently, whatever improprieties may be selected from his other works, they cannot warrant a charge against this picture in particular.

“But to form a just estimate of the work in question, we should first consider the species of objects of which the landscape is composed, whether they be or be not appropriate to the subject of the picture; and upon such examination it may certainly be allowed, that they all are of that kind which can only be selected from what are universally considered as the grandest, and most classical features in nature. But if the fastidious critic is displeased with these, which have been selected by Wilson, let him suppose his mind to be ‘thrown back two thousand years, and as it were naturalised in antiquity,’ what objects would then be selected from nature by his imagination, which differ from her productions in the present day? The natural materials of landscape have been the same in all ages. The only difference which characterises antiquity originates in the works of art, and if these had been introduced as antique features, they would certainly have counteracted the simplicity and grandeur of the picture as it now stands.

“Sir Joshua next observes, that ‘the figure of Apollo is placed in an uncommon situation, the clouds on which he kneels not having the appearance of being able to support him.’ By this remark it seems that Sir Joshua did not recollect the picture*, or examine the print, when he wrote his critique, for the figure in question is by no means so disposed as to give the spectator any idea of pain from its want of support; and the size is perfectly suited to its place, or representation upon the picture, as the appearance of the cloud is fully

* It is very possible that Sir Joshua formed his critique upon that picture of the subject which was first painted by Wilson, and is now in the possession of Sir George Beaumont, Bart., from which a print was engraved by S. Smith, who was a pupil of Mr. Woollet.

equal to the weight which it is supposed to sustain ; and, indeed, the figure appears to be floating upon that species of cloud, which is often seen rolling along in a thunder-storm, near the surface of the earth, while the rest of the atmosphere is loaded, and uniformly obscured, by those dark and heavy vapours that occasion the storm.

“ The severity of Sir Joshua, as before remarked, was in some degree attributed to private pique, and not without reason, for Sir Joshua and Wilson were often observed to treat each other, if not with rudeness, at least with acrimony.

“ Mr. Wilson left many excellent drawings and sketches, which are mostly executed in black and white chalk, upon blue-grey Roman paper ; they are generally distinguished by his mark.” *

Besides the introduction of figures into his pictures by a different hand, Wilson had frequently recourse to an expedient which has, by some persons, been very much found fault with, and attributed, under the most erroneous idea, to a deficiency in his powers of invention. I allude to the frequent repetition, by himself, of the same subject or view ; and which, in some instances, he has copied, with scarcely any variation whatever.

Although a similar practice is by no means uncommon with other masters, as well as with Wilson, and which the pictures of Sir Joshua Reynolds abundantly testify, I have, nevertheless, seen it remarked, that when our artist “ drew upon the stock of his own ideas,” such, or nearly, is the expression, “ he manifested great poverty of invention, being very often under the necessity of repeating himself.”

Now the circumstance which induced Wilson to take advantage of this un-artist like expedient, was altogether of a different nature from that which has been so inconsiderately attributed to him. What will these profound critics say, when they are informed, that it was necessity, dire necessity alone, which drove our unfortunate artist to this lamentable expedient ; a resource, at least to the extent to

* Edwards's Anecdotes.



Painted by R. Wilson.

VILLA EMELIA

Engraved by T. Hudson 1720

The large vaulted Portico of the Villa of Emelia. Plate I.
 From the Original by J. H. Hudson. See 1720.



which he, not unfrequently, was compelled to carry it, more befitting the hand of the mechanic, than a sublime genius like his; a species of drudgery, indeed, which, to a vigorous and fertile imagination, such as he unquestionably possessed, must have proved a task at once the most ungracious and irksome, that can well be conceived.

It will be seen in the following pages, with what extreme difficulty Wilson was able, at any time, to find a purchaser of his works; and to what miserable shifts, on numberless occasions, he was driven to get even the most trifling remuneration for his labours; for at such a low ebb was the taste of the day, that artists of very inferior merit, compared with him, engrossed almost the exclusive attention and patronage of the public; and it was only now and then that any person could be found daring enough to buy a production from his inimitable hand.

When, therefore, such an event did occur, we cannot be surprised that the painter should determine to make the most of it, and, by repeating the subject over and over again, so long as by its sale even a scanty pittance could be obtained, to turn it to the most profitable account. Such a picture, he, in his own homely phrase, was wont to denominate “a good breeder,” observing, at the same time, that he must make it produce as much as it was able, while there was a customer to be found.

That our artist was influenced by these motives alone, in repeating so often the subjects of his pencil, and that the expressions were unquestionably his own, are facts, imparted to me by the son of a person who was intimately acquainted with Wilson, and who knew his circumstances perfectly well.

How unfortunate, alas, is the lot of some men! and, oftentimes, how unjust and capricious are the opinions concerning them, which the world entertains! Here we see an unfortunate being, gifted with talents the most transcendent, driven, in order to obtain the very necessities of existence, to measures in the highest degree humiliating, and befitting only the ordinary practitioner in the art, — and

this arising from no other cause, than that the public was not able to understand, and still less to feel the sublimity of his powers; we see, what a whimsical world! this same person absolutely denied the very possession of those talents, merely from his having resorted to an expedient, to which alone incapacity in the public to discern them compelled him to stoop!

Away, then, with such cold calculating censors as these! and let *us*, in these more enlightened days, now that time, that great remover of prejudice, has brought the truth to light, endeavour to act a part more generous, and, at the same time, more just, to the memory of this great and much injured individual; and while we compassionate the hardships which in his life-time he was destined to undergo, let us hesitate no longer in paying to those sublime works he has fortunately left us, that fair tribute of our admiration and applause, which the delight and the gratification they are calculated to produce, so indisputably demand.

As no one can remain unconscious of his own powers, whatever share of modesty or humility he may possess, how great, how severe must have been the mortification to a mind constructed like that of Wilson, in finding his best hopes disappointed, and his labours denied either the encouragement or the recompence they so richly deserved; while he could see others, "whose natural gifts were poor to those of his," enjoying the patronage and support of the world!

It is said, that at the time that Barrett, the call for whose pictures was very great, failed, through his extravagant folly, he was in the receipt of two thousand a year, though at the very time poor Wilson could hardly sell a picture. The landscapes, too, of Smith of Chichester, although of very inferior merit, produced much higher prices than those of Wilson, from whom he carried the prize at the Royal Society.

Connoisseurship, indeed, seems at this period to have been little understood, and the degree of knowledge, even in those whose attention was at all directed to the art, appears to have been very inferior to that which we find in these more enlightened days. It has been



mentioned, that a gentleman having a Claude, so damaged as to require a new sky, employed Wilson to put it in; and, when done, brought some of his friends to see it, one of whom was a person much looked up to as a judge in the fine arts, who, on beholding the picture, exclaimed, "There! there is a sky! where is the artist alive, who can paint such an one?"

It has been reported also, that Wilson composed his picture of Ceyx and Alcyone for a pot of beer set on the remains of a Stilton cheese. To what miserable expedients, alas! as we have before remarked, does this exalted genius seem to have been driven, in order to the obtaining of even the mere necessities of existence!

Though possessed, as doubtless this great painter must have been, of that lofty and steady confidence in himself, the usual concomitant of great abilities; still, it is impossible not to suppose that the neglect which he experienced, added to his pecuniary embarrassments, must in no small degree have damped the ardour of his pursuit;

"This mournful truth is every where confess'd,
Slow rises worth, by Poverty depress'd."

DR. JOHNSON.

"To the disgrace of his country," observes an intelligent writer, "it was reserved for the liberality of foreigners, Zucarelli and Vernet, to develop the talents of Wilson, and to raise him into whatever sphere of public notice he acquired! Unless," continues the same writer, "contemporary accounts be utterly false, he was frequently under the necessity of taking his small pictures to particular brokers, and selling them for whatever trifling sum he could procure. His large pictures were often sent, fresh from the easel, to the same markets. There is a person now in St. James's parish, London, of whom it is said, that being hard pressed one day by Wilson to give a small sum for one of his pictures, he at length led the artist up to the attic story, and opening a door pointed to a pile of landscapes against the wall, saying, 'Why look ye, Dick, you know I wish to oblige you; but see, there's all the stock I paid you for these three years!'"

It is generally believed that some of the pictures thus gladly parted with for a few pounds, have been since sold for hundreds.

Besides brokers and other inferior venders of his works, there was a shoe-maker in Long Acre who was in the constant habit of receiving pictures newly painted from Wilson, for the purpose of exposing them for sale, his shop being furnished with two windows to the street, in one of which were placed the articles of his trade, and in the other, very frequently, a landscape by Wilson.

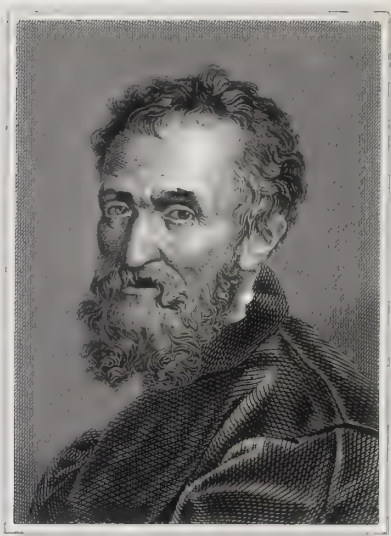
It has been well observed, that "the name of this extraordinary man is a reproach to the age in which he lived; the most accomplished landscape painter this country ever produced, uniting the composition of Claude with the execution of Poussin; avoiding the minuteness of the one and rivalling the spirit of the other. With powers which ought to have raised him to the highest fame, and recommended him to the most prosperous fortune, Wilson was suffered to live embarrassed, and to die poor. Conscious of his claims, however, he bore the neglect he experienced with firmness and dignity; and though he had the mortification to see very inferior talents preferred in the estimation of the public, yet he was never seduced to depart from his own style of painting, or to adopt the more fashionable and imposing qualities of art, which his superior judgment taught him to condemn, and which the example of his works ought to have exposed and suppressed."

But the public feeling is at length awakened to the merits of Wilson, though, unhappily, too late for him to benefit by the discovery, and the authentic productions of his hand are purchased at all fashionable sales with an avidity that procures for the picture-dealer the affluence which was denied to the painter.

" Kind too late,
Relenting Fortune weeps o'er Wilson's fate;
Remorseful owns her blindness, and to fame
Consigns, with sorrow, his illustrious name."

SHEE.

"How often," continues the same writer, whose remarks, whether in verse or in prose, upon an art in which he is himself so emi-



nently skilled, are no less judicious than they are refined, "How often has the liberal mind occasion to lament that perverseness of taste which refuses to be pleased with the efforts of genius while the pleasure can be reciprocal ; which affects apathy and indifference to all living merit, and disdains to bestow either praise or profit, till the one can be no longer heard, and the other no longer useful."*

"Cineri gloria sera venit."†

MARTIAL.

"What a pity," says a severe satirist of the day, "that the world should be so fascinated by high finishing, fan painting, the smooth Birmingham-waiter glare, the pigmy efforts of the art, as to be totally unaffected by the powers of the giant *Wilson*, as to proscribe the broad and vivid efforts of his pencil, and forbid his works an entrance into its palaces!‡ What a triumph for the shades of the Medicis, the patrons and idolaters of Michael Angelo and Raphael! What a pity that the patronage which might have fostered the breed of eagles should have perverted the blessing to the support of hedge-sparrows and tom-tits!"||

The same writer (as it is believed) and poet, Peter Pindar, who was a great friend of Wilson, and felt the full value of his matchless productions, says, in no less energetic strains,

"Wilson's art
Will hold its empire o'er my heart,
By Britain left in poverty to pine.—
But, honest Wilson, never mind :
Immortal praises thou shalt find ;
And for a dinner have no cause to fear.—
Thou start'st at my prophetic rhymes !
Don't be impatient for those times :
Wait till thou hast been dead a hundred year !"§

* Shee's Rhymes on Art.

† "That glory profits a man but little which arrives only after he is in his grave."

‡ This is in allusion to the picture ordered by his late majesty, and returned upon the painter's hands ; a circumstance which will be noticed in a subsequent page.

|| Vide Supplement to the new edition of Pilkington's Dictionary of Painters. The article entitled "*Wilson*" therein, is supposed to have been written by Dr. Walcott, alias Peter Pindar.

§ Odes to the Academicians, by Peter Pindar.

So much did pecuniary difficulties oppress the latter years of poor Wilson, previously to his retiring from the metropolis, that the place of librarian to the Royal Academy, the whole emolument of which amounts to about fifty pounds a year, was conferred upon him to enable him to eke out a mere subsistence !

When, therefore, we compare the high estimation in which the pictures of this artist are held at the present day, the eagerness with which they are sought after, and the extraordinary prices they procure, with the sad neglect and indifference they were doomed to experience during the lifetime of the unfortunate painter, one can hardly sufficiently admire the singular taste and discernment which prompted these "prophetic rhymes:" indeed, the fate Wilson must for ever remain a convincing proof, how few possess a real *feeling* for the art, and how much, in matters of *virtù*, the multitude are guided by the prevailing opinion of the day.

The time, however, is at length arrived in which the poet's prophecy is fulfilled, and it is now the fashion to admire and to extol the heretofore rejected paintings of Wilson.

CHAP. III.

MOMPER. — HIS WORKS STUDIED BY WILSON. — GALLERY OF PORTRAITS AT FLORENCE. — SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. — HIS SENTIMENTS RESPECTING THE STUDY OF PAINTING. — THE PICTURES OF WILSON ADDRESSED TO THE IMAGINATION, AND INTENDED TO PRODUCE A PLEASING EFFECT UPON THE MIND. — THE GENERAL EFFECT, AND THE PICTURE CONSIDERED AS A WHOLE, HIS CHIEF CONCERN. — HIS METHOD OF STUDY WHILE IN ITALY. — THE PRINCIPLES OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING, AS LAID DOWN BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS AND MR. ALISON. — EMOTIONS OF TASTE. — TRAIN OF THOUGHT. — IMAGINATION. — UNITY OF EXPRESSION AND CHARACTER. — SIMPLICITY. — WILSON SUPERIOR TO CLAUDE IN EXHIBITING THE MORE STRIKING EFFECTS OF NATURE, AND IN THE USE OF ACCIDENTS. — COMPARISON BETWEEN CLAUDE AND GASPARD POUSSIN.

THERE is a circumstance respecting the pictures of Wilson, which has always very forcibly struck me, and concerning which, although a number of writers have at different times, in a cursory manner, touched upon either the merit, the style, or the history of this artist, not one of them, at least as far as I have been able to discover, has taken any notice whatever; and that is, that in the beginning of his practice, in landscape painting, Wilson must have very carefully observed, and in no small degree attentively studied, the works of Momper; of this unquestionable proof was afforded me during my residence at Rome. In a gentleman's collection there, I was shown an early picture of Wilson, painted while he resided in that city, placed by the side of one of Momper; the very great resemblance both in manner and colour was truly remarkable; so much so, that no one who saw the two paintings together, could for a moment doubt of the truth of the observation which has been made.

I have little hesitation, therefore, in believing that the foundation of that excellence to which our countryman attained, more particularly in that most difficult and rare perfection of landscape painting,

viz. the representation of the pure and pearly tint of *air*, was derived in no inconsiderable degree from an accurate observance of the works of Momper, accompanied doubtless, with an unremitted study of nature. Zucarelli and Vernet have both been mentioned as models in Wilson's pursuit; but I am of opinion that he was more indebted to the abovenamed artist, than to either.

To trace the mode of study, practised by a painter, who, like Wilson, arrived at such perfection in his art, and the means which he used, especially in the commencement of his career, may be considered, at least an interesting, if not a useful investigation.

Like every other candidate for fame in a similar pursuit, possessed of that enthusiasm and unwearied application, by which alone the difficulties of the art are to be overcome, Wilson, we may be well assured, omitted no opportunity of forming his taste by the study of the best pictures of all the various painters of landscape within his reach; from these, he naturally formed his own conception of what was fine; and thus, unfettered by the rules or the manner of any particular master, he gradually prepared himself to adopt a style entirely his own.

The pictures, however, of Momper, appear in a more particular manner to have made an impression upon his mind, and in his productions, more particularly at the commencement of his becoming a landscape painter, may be traced ideas founded on these early associations.

So continually indeed has the impression of this fact been renewed by repeated observation, that I feel almost disposed to carry the consideration of it still further, and to be of opinion, that our artist never during the whole course of his career, lost sight altogether of the groundwork, upon which to a certain extent his early practice had been raised. In contemplating even his later and more studied compositions, I have in various instances been considerably struck with here and there some reminiscence of Momper, produced by the resemblance to his manner, which some particular passage or group of figures in Wilson's pictures evidently possessed. The in-



e viste nel 1844.

disegnato dal vero.

Disegnato Amici.

troductioin into the foreground for example, of the large, round, and sometimes oblong stone, so often to be met with in the compositions of our artist, had its origin, perhaps, in no other quarter, a similar practice being often observable in the pictures of the abovenamed master.

During my residence at Rome, many opportunities occurred of seeing pictures of Momper ; so much interest, indeed, did I feel in this master's works, arising partly from the conviction of the high estimation in which they must have been held by our great countryman, that no opportunity was omitted of procuring specimens of his pencil, wherever they were to be found. In a city, such as Rome, where works of art are more thought of than any thing else, a circumstance of this kind becomes presently known, and the consequence was, that the doors of my fellow traveller and myself were soon beset with picture dealers, and other venders of what they wished very frequently to pass off, as pictures by Momper, a painter whose works had previously been rarely enquired after. The eagerness of these gentry, and the avidity with which they ransacked every quarter of the city, in search of such commodities, gave rise to a number of very ludicrous scenes. These people, indeed, seemed to consider the Signori Inglesi as made absolutely of money, and that we were equally ready for every thing that was offered.

In this manner I was able to obtain no less than six of Momper's pictures, still in my possession, and four others were bought by my fellow traveller at the same place, the latter of which are at his seat at Chivet, in Yorkshire.

Mr. Barnett, sen. an eminent picture-dealer, assured me, that until he had seen these pictures he had no idea of the powers of Momper, and that his works, at least those of a superior kind, were altogether unknown in this country ; and, indeed, most true it is, that in very few collections are any examples of this painter to be found.

At Worksop Manor, the seat of his Grace the Duke of Norfolk, I remember to have seen a specimen of this master of small dimensions, yet in excellent preservation. This little picture (of

which a doubt could not be entertained as to its being Momper's) was hung up in the midst of a great many others, by different hands, in an apartment of considerable size ; but so instantaneously did its sparkling beauty, and exquisitely clear and brilliant colouring, especially in the sky and distance, catch my eye, and such was the striking effect which its admirable claro-oscuro produced, that most of the other paintings appeared poor and meagre by the side of it. And yet the subject of this piece was of inconsiderable interest ; but the transparency, the mellowness, the pearly brightness of its hue, announced it as the work of no common hand. In the housekeeper's account of the names of the different painters, and the estimation in which the rest of the pictures were held, she appeared to be most perfectly at home ; but respecting the one in question, it was candidly acknowledged that she had never been able to find out the painter's name, notwithstanding her repeated enquiries.

This sudden and forcible appeal to my notice, reminded me of a somewhat similar claim experienced, many years ago, on first entering the magnificent gallery of portraits at Florence. In this spacious apartment are collected, to the amount of several hundreds, the portraits of celebrated painters, all executed by themselves ; they are of small size (heads), hang close together, and cover the walls of the gallery from the top to the bottom. No sooner had I passed the threshold of the door, than my attention was instantly arrested by the very striking appearance of one of these pictures, which, though in no way set off, either by its situation or its frame, shone, like a diamond among common stones, with singular brilliancy and effect. Upon a nearer approach, I was most agreeably, no less than unexpectedly delighted to discover that this very beautiful and attractive picture was no other than the portrait of our great Sir Joshua himself ! The pride and exultation which I felt at that moment, in thus witnessing the very conspicuous superiority of our countryman (in colour, at least) was such as cannot be described.*

* Though the picture here mentioned may not possibly be ranked among the *first* productions of Sir Joshua Reynolds, it must still be considered as one of the best and most striking portraits in the collection.

Among this interesting assemblage of great men, our inimitable Wilson, I am sorry to say, was no where to be found ; surely his portrait, too, was well deserving of a place in this temple of fame ! “ Anch’ io sono pittore,” * might he justly exclaim, and doubtless with as much truth as any individual in the room.

Neither Wilson or Momper seem to have considered high finishing as much worthy of their regard ; to please was their object, rather than to surprise ; the *general effect*, rather than the particular detail, engaged the attention of these artists ; and though, in their representations of nature, an apparent negligence and slightness of manner may lead many to overlook the merit which they possess, nevertheless, among all true judges of the art, they must ever be considered as works replete with science, with judgment, and taste. That which is most laboured is not always most worthy to be seen, and the most obvious are not the most arduous difficulties ; “ in painting, indeed, in particular,” as it has been well observed, “ the most exquisite effects of skill are often concealed in their own ingenuity, and least palpable when most successful.” “ *Ars est celare artem.*” The great art, whether in writing or painting, is to prevent the discovery of the very art that has been employed ; a perfection attainable only by long practice and observation, and to be duly appreciated by none, except such as are possessed of a refined taste and great experience.

Since, in considering the early practice of Wilson, much stress has been laid upon a comparison that may not so forcibly strike the observation of others ; and as Momper’s works are rarely to be met with in the cabinets of our collectors in this country, it may not be foreign to the purpose if I give some account of this artist, and of his particular style in painting. Some observations, therefore, collected from different authors respecting him, I shall venture to offer, in support of the opinion advanced.

Momper was born at Antwerp, and studied at Rome. “ His pictures,” says Mr. Bryan, in his Dictionary of Painters and En-

* “ I, too, am a painter.”— A saying of Corregio.

gravers, "are frequently decorated with figures by the elder Teniers, or John Breughel. Vandyke painted the portrait of Momper, among the celebrated artists of his country, and etched a plate of it himself. His pencil is broad and facile, and his colouring clear and of an agreeable effect."

In speaking of this artist, Pilkington makes the following remarks. "Though some of his paintings are well handled, and penciled with transparency and neatness, yet in general his pictures are not laboured or highly finished, but are intended to produce a good effect, at a considerable distance from the eye of the spectator. His landscapes show an immense tract of country, and the imagination is often agreeably amused with the extensiveness of the prospect, which is always well conducted. However, the freedom of his touch seems to some observers to have too much the appearance of negligence."

In the "*Abrégé de la Vie des plus fameux Peintres*," by Mons. Dargenville, is the following account of Momper. Whether Wilson was acquainted with that author's work or not, it is impossible to say; he, nevertheless, seems, judging from the comparison that has been made, to have looked upon the productions of the Fleming with pretty much the same eye that M. Dargenville appears to have done; indeed, the description which this writer gives of Momper's style, and the peculiar excellencies which he points out, as belonging to his works, may, in a great degree, be equally applicable to the paintings of Wilson, especially of his larger productions.

As the force of his expressions might be weakened by translation, the account shall be given in the author's own words. *

"Josse Momper peut passer pour un grand paisagiste; il naquit environ l'an 1580, sans qu'on sache précisément le nom de la ville, celui de son père, et qui fut son maître. Il faut croire qu'en habille homme, il n'en eut d'autre que la nature; il peignoit tout d'après elle, d'une touche légère, sans rien finir, de manière que ses tableaux ne font leur effet que de loin.

* For a translation of this account of Momper, vide Appendix, at the end of the volume.



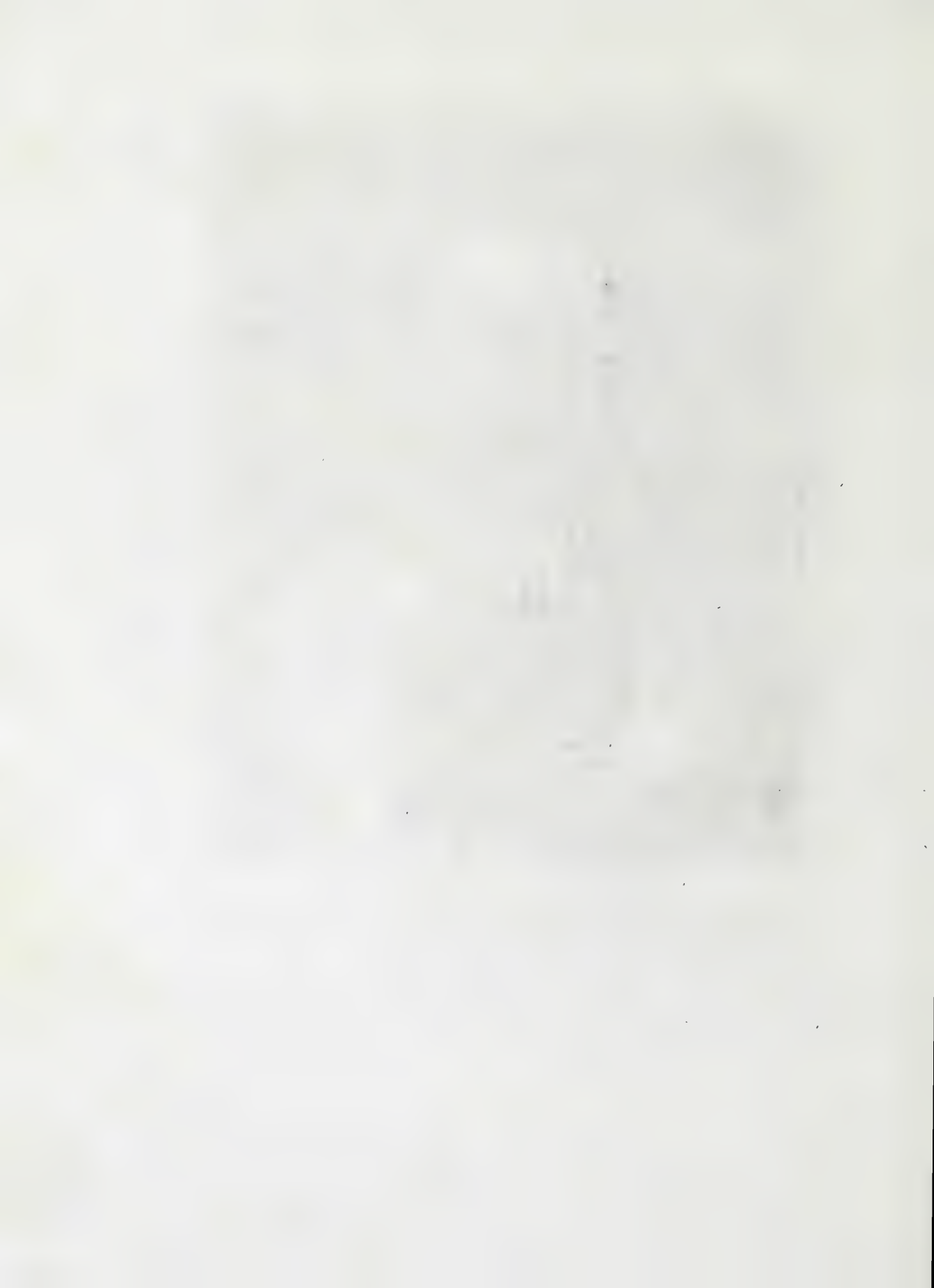
ROELANT SAVERY

22.

A été un peintre extraordinaire des animaux, et autres oyseaux; et les paysages les quelles il fait, sont bien estimees de les amateurs de la peinture il est natif de Flandres. il a esté peintre du l'Empereur Rudolphe second.

Adam Willaert delin.

Io. Meyssens fecit et excudit.



“ Cette pratique plaît moins aux yeux, aussi lui a-t-elle attiré peu de sectateurs ; mais sans prévention, ne vaut-elle pas autant qu’une qui sert plus finie, pourvû qu’elle fasse son effet, qu’elle surprenne, qu’elle trompe le spectateur ? Que peut faire de plus le gout fini de Breugel, de Paul Bril, et de Savery ? Josse Momper n’a pas suivi le gout de son pays, il a cherché la nature, et cette commune mère s’est montrée a lui bien différente de ce qu’elle a paru aux autres Flamans. Le beau site de ses païsages lui a acquis un certain nom ; ces tableaux font un grand effet par leur dégradation ; et par leur étenduë admirable il vous proménent l’imagination plus qu’aucun autre peintre.

“ Il faut cependant convenir que les ouvrages de ce maître trouvent peu d’accès dans les grands cabinets, et ne sont pas cher. Une certaine négligence quand on les regard de pres, leur touche peu terminée, ne les met pas au rang des autres Flamans, que ne sont estimés que pour le précieux fini.”

It would seem from this account, that the excellencies of Momper’s pictures, like those of Wilson, were neither felt nor understood in his day, and that neglect and indifference were alike the portion of both.

Let it not be imagined that, in drawing this comparison, the originality of Wilson is called in question ; all that is meant to be implied by the foregoing remarks is, that in the commencement of his study in landscape painting, he made choice of the works of Momper, in preference to those of any other master, as his guide. Every practitioner must necessarily, at first, have some model to form himself by, some one to furnish him with the method, and the rudiments of his art ; to say, then, that Wilson or any other painter derived no assistance from the works of his predecessors, would be altogether absurd ; “ for if,” as Sir Joshua Reynolds observes, “ we were denied the advantages which they afford, the art would be always to begin, and consequently remain in its infant state ; and it is a common observation, that no art was ever invented, and carried to perfection at the same time.”

“ A painter,” continues the same admirable instructor, in whose hand the pencil and the pen may be said to have moved with equal grace, “ a painter must not only be an imitator of nature, but he must as necessarily be an imitator of the works of other painters, and no man can be an artist, whatever he may suppose, upon any other terms.

“ For my own part,” the president goes on to say, “ I am not only very much disposed to maintain the absolute necessity, in the first stages of the art, but am of opinion that the study of other masters, which I here call imitation, may be extended throughout our whole lives, without any danger of the inconveniences with which it is charged, or of enfeebling the mind, or preventing us from giving that original air which every work undoubtedly ought always to have.

“ I am, on the contrary, persuaded that by imitation only, variety and even originality of invention is produced. I will go further; even genius, at least what is generally so called, is the child of imitation. Invention is one of the great marks of genius; but if we consult experience, we shall find, that it is by being conversant with the inventions of others, that we learn to invent, as by reading the thoughts of others, we learn to think. It is in vain for painters or poets to endeavour to invent without materials on which the mind may work, and from which invention must originate. Nothing can come of nothing.

“ It is,” adds Sir Joshua, “ a necessary and warrantable pride to disdain to walk servilely behind any individual, however exalted his rank. The true and liberal ground of imitation is an open field, where, though he who precedes has the advantage of starting before you, you may always propose to overtake him; it is enough, however, to pursue his course; you need not tread in his footsteps, and you certainly have a right to outstrip him if you can.”

Thus did Wilson pursue, and thus did he outstrip Momper, both in execution and colour, as well as in every other department of the art.

That a painter's works, which by the public were so lightly esteemed, as it appears Momper's were, should attract the notice and regard of our artist, though painted nearly a century and a half before his own time, is a proof of the unprejudiced discrimination of his mind, and evinces in an high degree, how determined he was to *see with his own eyes*, and no less so to judge *for himself*, without allowing, as is too commonly the case, the opinions of others, however generally received, to prevent him from detecting real merit, wherever it was to be found, or of turning to his own advantage the discovery when made.

The *imagination* rather than the eye, was, with Wilson, the object to which his productions were intended to be addressed; he seems indeed to have been fully sensible of this great truth, that "*mind* must be ever considered the true excellence in art; that a mere copier of nature can never produce any thing great; can never raise and enlarge the conceptions, or warm the heart of the spectator;" for, as Mr. Gilpin justly remarks, "all the real artist wishes, is to give *such characteristic touches* to his pictures, as may be able to rouse the imagination of the beholder. The picture is not so much the *ultimate* end, as it is the *medium* through which the ravishing scenes of nature are excited in the imagination; for the true *enjoyment* of the *picture* depends chiefly on the *imagination* of the spectator."*

"It is not the eye, it is the mind," says Sir Joshua, "which the painter of genius desires to address; nor will he waste a moment upon those objects which only serve to catch the sense, to divide the attention, and to counteract his great design of speaking to the heart;" well knowing that "the value and rank of every art is in proportion to the mental labour employed in, or the mental pleasure produced by it; instead of endeavouring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, the genuine painter will endeavour to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas; instead of seeking praise by deceiving the superficial sense of the spectator, he will

* Gilpin on Picturesque Beauty.

strive for fame by captivating the imagination. The painter, therefore, is to make no ostentation of the means by which this is done; the spectator is only to feel the result in his bosom. An inferior artist is unwilling that any part of his industry should be lost on the spectator. He takes as much pains to discover, as the greater artist does to conceal, the marks of his subordinate assiduity.

“A landscape painter certainly ought to study anatomically (if I may use the expression) all the objects which he paints; but when he is to turn his studies to use, his skill, as a man of genius, will be displayed in showing the general effect, preserving the same degree of hardness and softness which the objects have in nature: for he applies himself to the imagination not to curiosity.

“In a word, the great end of the fine arts,” continues the learned president, “is to make an impression on the imagination, and the feeling. I think, therefore, the true test of all the arts, is not solely, whether the production is a true copy of nature, but whether it answers the end of the art, which is to produce a pleasing effect upon the mind.”

To every attentive observer of the pictures of Wilson, it must be sufficiently evident, that a similar principle, and an object, such as has here been defined, influenced, in a very extended degree, the mind of this master, and characterised the operations of his inimitable hand.

Wilson's contemplation of art was of the most elevated kind; without fatiguing by detail, or entering into the minutiae of nature, his grand object was to display that genius which consists in the power of expressing that which employed his pencil, whatever it might be, *as a whole*; so that the general effect and power of the whole might take possession of the mind, and for a while suspend the consideration of the subordinate and particular beauties or defects. *

In a late publication, there are some observations on the style of Wilson's paintings, and, more especially, on that particular excellence which he possessed, of exciting the imagination of his behold-

* Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds.





ers, and upon which so much stress has been laid, that they may with propriety be introduced here, as a further proof how much he contemplated and practised the art, in the manner above described.

We have, indeed, only to ascertain from those who, being conversant with the subject, are best fitted by erudition and a cultivated mind, to determine in what the true principles of landscape painting consist, and then to try, by a standard of such undoubted authority, the productions of our artist, and we shall quickly discover in what an elevated situation he stands.

“Wilson,” observes the writer alluded to, “upon his arrival in Italy, choosing not to confine himself merely to the study of the art, which would have made him an imitator or a mannerist, studied nature in her finest attitudes, and among the grandest forms; and having examined a picture in the morning, would compare its fidelity with nature in the evening. It was this that enabled him to acquire his bold and original style. Upon his return to his native country, the imagery of Italy still hovered in his imagination, and he could never, in the sketching of landscapes, so far forget the lofty character of that lovely country, as to content himself with delineating English scenes, merely as they were. The slopes were too tame and uninteresting for his classic pencil. The result of all this was, that though he never failed to finish a good picture, he always failed to give a faithful portrait of the scene which he intended to portray.

“This painter,” continues the same author, “had the faculty of exciting the imagination of his observers in no common degree; this is one of the most delightful effects which the art of painting is capable of producing; for it is not the actual scene presented to the eye that constitutes the principal charm in landscape painting,—it is the fine conceptions which it awakens in the mind, and which float, as it were, in the imagination, in endless varieties of forms, and in indescribable fascination of colour.” *

Perhaps no landscape painter, either before or since Wilson, ever excited in the mind, in a higher degree, that delightful feeling

* The Philosophy of Nature, or the Influence of Scenery on the Mind and Heart.

which, as Mr. Alison observes, it is the great object of the fine arts to produce ; viz. The emotions of taste, or that exercise of the imagination which consists of *a train of thought*. How well, too, did this admirable painter understand that “the great source of the superiority of his productions to the original scenes in nature, consisted in the purity and harmony of his composition ; in the power which he enjoyed of removing from his landscapes whatever was hostile to its effect or unsuited to its character, and by selecting only such circumstances as accord with the general expression of the scene ; awakening an emotion more full, more simple, and more harmonious than any we can receive from the scenes of nature itself.”*

In treating of this subject, the elegant writer of the Essay on Taste appears to have been influenced so exactly by that feeling which the singular merit of Wilson’s pictures inspire, that I cannot resist transcribing some additional observations from his interesting work. The remarks, indeed, of Mr. Alison are so apposite, and must so materially assist the connoisseur in pointing out the peculiar excellencies of this master, that one cannot but imagine them as intended to be applied almost exclusively to him ; for to no other painter does it appear that they could, with equal truth, so entirely belong.

“The art of landscape painting,” says he, “is superior in its effect to real nature, from the capacity which the artist enjoys of giving greater extent and greater *unity* to his composition. In a landscape the painter has the choice of the circumstances he is to represent, and can give whatever force or extent he pleases to the expression he wishes to convey. He may select from a thousand scenes, the circumstances which are to characterise a single composition, and may unite into one expression the scattered features with which nature has feebly marked a thousand situations. The momentary effects of light and shade, the fortunate incidents which chance sometimes throws in to improve the expression of real

* Alison’s Essay on Taste.

scenery, and which can never again be recalled, he has it in his power to perpetuate upon his canvass; above all, the occupations of men, so important in determining or in heightening the character of nature, fall easily within the reach of his imitation, and afford him the means of producing both greater strength and greater *unity of expression*, than is to be found either in the rude, or in the embellished state of real society.

“ It is by this rule, accordingly, that the excellence of all such composition is determined. In real nature we often forgive, or are willing to forget, slight inaccuracies or trifling inconsistencies; but in such productions of design we expect and require more perfect correspondence. Every object that is not suited to the *character of the scene*, or that has not an effect in strengthening the *expression* by which it is distinguished, we condemn as an intrusion, and consider as a reproach upon the taste of the artist. When this expectation, on the contrary, is fully gratified; when the circumstances of the scenery are all such as accord with the peculiar emotion which the scene is fitted to inspire; when the hand of the artist disappears, and the embellishments of his fancy press upon our belief as the voluntary profusion of nature, we immediately pronounce that the composition is perfect; we acknowledge that he has attained the end of his art; and, in yielding ourselves up to the emotion which his composition demands, we afford him the most convincing mark of our applause.

“ In the power which the art of landscape painting thus possesses, in common with the other fine arts, of withdrawing from its imitations whatever is inconsistent with their expression, and of adding whatever may contribute to strengthen or to extend their effect, consists the great superiority which it possesses over the originals from which they are copied.

“ While it is by the invention of such circumstances that we estimate the genius of the artist, it is by their composition that his taste is uniformly determined. The mere assemblage of picturesque incidents the most unimproved taste will condemn. Some *general*

principle is universally demanded, some *decided expression*, to which the meaning of the several parts may be referred, and which, by affording us, as it were, the key of the scene, may lead us to feel, from the whole of the composition, that full and undisturbed emotion which we are prepared to indulge. It is this purity of composition, accordingly, which has uniformly distinguished the great masters of the art from the mere copiers of nature. It is by their adherence to it that their fame has been attained; and the source of the superiority which such imitations have over the originals, from which they are copied, consist in the power which the artist enjoys of giving a *unity of character* to his productions, which is not to be found in real nature: the names of Salvator and Claude Lorraine," and (Mr. Alison might have added) of Gaspar and Wilson, "can scarcely be mentioned, without bringing to mind the peculiar character of their compositions, and the different emotions which their representations of nature are destined to produce.

"It is not, however," continues this accurate observer, "on our first acquaintance with this art, that we either discover its capacity or its effects; and perhaps the progress of taste, in this respect, may afford a further illustration of the great and fundamental principle of composition. What we first understand of painting is, that it is a simple art of imitation; and what we expect to find in it, is the representation of the common scenes of nature that surround us. It is with some degree of surprise, accordingly, that we at first observe the different scenery with which the painter presents us, and with an emotion rather of wonder than of delight, that we gaze at a style of landscape which has so little resemblance to the ordinary views to which we are accustomed. In the copy of a real scene we can discover and admire the skill of the artist; but in the representation of desert or of desolate prospects, in appearances of solitude or tempest, we perceive no traces of imitation, and wonder only at the perversity of taste which could have led to the choice of so disagreeable subjects.

"As soon, however, as from the progress of our sensibility, or

from our acquaintance with poetical composition, we begin to connect *expression* with such views of nature ; we begin, also, to understand and to feel the beauties of landscape painting. It is with a different view that we now consider it. It is not for *imitation* we look, but for *character*. It is not the art, but the genius of the painter, which now gives value to his compositions ; and the language he employs is found not only to speak to the eye, but to affect the *imagination* and the heart. It is not now a simple copy which we see, nor is our emotion limited to the cold pleasure which arises from the perception of accurate imitation. It is a creation of fancy with which the artist presents us, in which only the *greater expressions* of nature are retained, and where more interesting emotions are awakened, than those which we experience from the usual tameness of common scenery. In the same proportion in which we thus discover the expression of landscape, we begin to collect the principles of its composition. The crowd of incidents which used to dazzle our earlier taste, as expressive both of the skill and the invention of the artist, begin to appear to us as inconsistency or confusion. When our hearts are affected, we seek only for objects congenial to our emotion ; and the *simplicity* which we used to call the poverty of landscape, begins now to be welcome to us, permitting us to indulge, without interruption, those interesting *trains of thought* which the character of the scene is fitted to inspire. As our knowledge of the expressions of nature increases, our sensibility to the beauty, or to the defects of composition, becomes more keen, until at last our admiration attaches itself only to those greater productions of the art in which *one pure* and *unmingled character* is preserved, and in which no feature is admitted which may prevent it from falling upon the heart with one full and harmonious effect.

“ In this manner, the object of painting is no sooner discovered than the *unity of expression* is felt to be the great secret of its power ; the superiority which it at last assumes over the scenery of nature, is found to arise, in one important respect, from the greater purity and *simplicity* which its composition can attain ; and perhaps this

simple rule comprehends all that criticism can prescribe for the regulation of this delightful art." *

It may be deemed, in the opinion of some, that a larger portion than was perhaps necessary has been quoted from a work so generally known as Mr. Alison's Essay on Taste ; as, however, it is quite certain that the more Wilson's pictures are examined with reference to the rules of the art, the more conspicuously must their merits appear, it seemed desirable that a standard so well defined should be placed immediately before the eye of the reader, while forming his judgment respecting their claims to excellence. A well understood acquaintance, indeed, with the true principles of composition in landscape painting, cannot fail, very greatly, to heighten the gratification to be derived from the contemplation of his works, and ought, unquestionably, to be fully and distinctly implanted in the mind of the student, without which the pleasure to be derived from the study either of pictures or the scenery of nature, is capable of being very imperfectly enjoyed.

" A landscape thus conducted," observes Sir Joshua, " under the influence of a poetical mind, will have the same superiority over the more ordinary and common views, as Milton's Allegro and Penseroso have over a cold prosaic narration or description ; and such a picture would make a more forcible impression on the mind than the real scenes were they presented before us !"

" Beauty best is taught
By those, the favour'd few, whom heaven has lent
The power to seize, select, and reunite
Her loveliest features ; and of those to form
One archetype complete, of sovereign grace.
Here Nature sees her fairest forms more fair ;
Owns them as hers, yet owns herself excell'd,
By what herself produced."

GILPIN.

Now, if in contemplating the pictures of Wilson, whose real excellencies are not detected without study and accurate observation,

* Alison's Essay on Taste.



ÆRE. ARG. AVRO

E
MARMORE
IN ECCLESIA
SANCTI PETRI
APUD WESTMONASTERIUM
ERECTORE
GULIELMO BENSONO ARM
ANNO SALUTIS HUMANÆ
M DCC XXXVII.
RYSBRACHIUS
SCULPSIT.



accompanied by a calm and composed state of mind, fully alive to, and ready to receive, those emotions of taste which we have been considering, an acquaintance with which, be it observed, and the singular delight arising from them, are not to be obtained by a mere superficial attention to the art ; if, I say, in examining the compositions of Wilson, we bear in mind the theory thus ably set forth, how greatly must they rise in our estimation ?

In so doing, we cannot fail to discover, that the principles and the regulations which Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. Alison have laid down, were ever present to the thoughts of this artist ; for with such principles, and such regulations alone, could he affect, as he does, the mind and the heart of the spectator.

The chaste *simplicity* of composition, the sublime *expression*, the pure and harmonious *general effect*, which his productions display ; together with the well understood *unity of character*, assisted, as it is, by figures most judiciously introduced, which, although they may not be highly finished, are always well placed, well coloured, and appropriate to the scene ; these excellencies combined, never fail to excite, in the *imagination* of the beholder, that enchanting *train of thought* which, as these writers define, it is the true end of the art to produce.

To the enthusiastic admirer of nature, possessed of a mind thus prepared to receive, and a taste to appreciate, the beauties of art ; having his feelings at the same time “unmixed,” if I may so say, “with baser matter,” that is, undisturbed with associations unsuited to the feast, the contemplation of a fine picture of Wilson (take, for instance, the Phaëton, the Niobe, or the Apollo and the Seasons,) will furnish the like rapturous enjoyment that is experienced by the connoisseur in music, while listening to a finely executed anthem of Handel ; provided he be gifted with that sensibility, without which there can be little enjoyment either to the one or the other.

“ Nor less delight
The spirit felt, when still and charm'd I sate,
Great Milton's solemn harmonies to hear ;
That swell to the full choir, and strong and clear,
Their long commingling diapason roll,
In numerous sweetness.”

BOWLES.

The compositions of Wilson are of the purest and most captivating kind, — simple, chaste, elegant, and classical ; when he chose to exhibit nature in her terrific or agitated forms, he became instantly sublime. In subjects of this kind he is superior, it must be confessed, to Claude, who seldom attempted any thing of the sort ; for, however admirable that great landscape painter is, in the representation of the tranquil scenes of nature, we rarely find an exhibition of those appearances which come under the class of the grand in effect.

“It is true,” as Mr. Gilpin justly observes, “that the objects which Claude painted are of the *grand species* ; he saw no other ; but he seldom made the best use of them, by bringing them forward and producing grand effects.” *

With Wilson, on the contrary, this was not the case, and perhaps few painters ever exhibited the more awful appearances of nature with equal grandeur and sublimity of effect.

In these remarks, let it not be imagined, that a comparison is meant to be drawn between two artists whose style is so different ; or that there is any desire of raising the one, by lowering the merits of the other. The works of both these masters produce in us the purest mental pleasure, and are, in their respective ways, each of them most justly entitled to our highest commendation and regard.

To call in question the powers of an artist with a reputation like Claude's, whose pictures have, for such a length of time, been the admiration of all, might seem like presumption, and it is with the greatest deference that I hazard a remark of the kind, though, in so doing, I am supported by abler judges than myself ; yet I cannot but think they have handled the matter somewhat unfairly. These advocates for our countryman seem to have thought, that by detracting from the merits of Lorraine, they should place Wilson far above his predecessor in the temple of Fame ; and this, too, in terms at once the most prejudiced and unfair ; for whatever may be said in respect of the awful or the terrific, all must agree, that in the represent-

* Gilpin on Picturesque Beauty.



JOHN RUSSELL

Member of the House of Commons

1790-1800

Engraved by J. Smith

London: J. Smith, 1800

ation of the serene and pleasing scenes of nature, in the pastoral style, as Claude's may very properly be called, this charming painter must ever hold the high station to which he has, by universal consent, so very justly been raised; and his truly beautiful landscapes can never fail to inspire the heart of the beholder with the purest sentiments of satisfaction and delight.

In a life of Nicolo Poussin, published not long ago, a comparison is drawn between Claude and Gaspar, in which are some judicious observations upon the different style and method of seeing nature, observable in the works of these artists; and as the author concludes her remarks with a reference to the peculiar merits of Wilson, making, at the same time, honourable mention of the artists of our own country in general; of whom, as compared with the landscape painters of the present day in Italy, she speaks in terms most highly flattering, it will not be foreign to my present purpose if I introduce the remarks alluded to in the writer's own words. This, indeed, will be only acting in conformity with the plan proposed at setting out, viz. of bringing together whatever could be collected respecting the artist under consideration, which may, in any degree, tend to point out the peculiar excellence of his works, and, at the same time, of putting upon record all that has been written in any way deserving of regard concerning him.

In speaking of these landscape painters, the writer observes, "It is difficult to say which of these two great masters is most poetical. Both have looked into nature, and seen her truly, but differently: Gaspar Poussin loves the landscape before the sun is up, or after he is set, or when heavy clouds only permit a bright beam to flash through his dark foliage; Claude must have sun, and light, and life. His mornings are fresh, yet sparkling; his day makes the shades of his trees necessary for the eye and the imagination, and we dread the moment when night must obscure his lovely evenings. From the Trinità di Monte, all Claude's effects, and many of his subjects, may be traced. From the little portico of his house, the view over the vale of the Tiber, the fine lines of the Vatican, the Monte Mario,

and the Villa Medici, which he has introduced in many of his pictures, are seen to peculiar advantage, both in the morning and evening effect. Gaspar's compositions are often drawn from the same source ; but his lights and colours seem to be more taken from the massy walls and ruins of the city, where the Colliseum and the Palatine require shadows, approaching to darkness, to soften the red ruin into the verdant decorations with which time has adorned their venerable summits. The picturesque beauty of Rome was truly felt by these great painters, and excepting the backgrounds of Domenichino, and those of Nicolo Poussin, scarcely any other has done it justice.

“ Of modern painters,” continues the same author, “ our countryman may perhaps rival these. Wilson painted views, and animated them by historic combinations and figures. Turner, before he saw Italy, seems, by the imagination of genius, to have painted the colour of the Campagna ; and among modern artists, resident at Rome, in 1819, none but the English seemed truly to feel the value of what surrounded them. The French, Germans, and Italians made correct or imaginary views ; but, excepting the English, I never saw the poetry of Rome painted.”*

To the above shall be added the observations of another writer, who, in treating of the use of *accidents* and the *claro-oscuro* in painting, draws his reader's attention to the respective compositions of the two painters whose productions we have just been considering.

“ The works of Gaspar,” says this author, “ contain examples of great excellence in this part of the art ; a comparison between the prints of his works and those of Claude, which, being without colour, will show the superiority of the former to the tame and almost insipid gradation of the latter, who, depending upon colouring, in which he greatly excelled, never ventured to introduce, and probably did not feel, those almost electrical effects caused by the skilful

* Life of Nicolas Poussin, by Mrs. Graham.



MONTE CAVALLO, ROME.

View from the Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome, looking towards the Tiber and the city.



Rembrandt pinx^t

H. C. Maguire lith

management of sudden bursts of light, as treated by Gaspar Poussin, Rembrant, Rubens, Wilson, and other great masters.”*

What has been said in the foregoing observations, respecting the comparison of the prints after Claude, with those engraved from the works of Gaspar Poussin, as exhibiting their respective effects in their management of light and shade, may, with equal truth, be advanced, and, perhaps, in a still greater degree, in regard to those from Wilson, who, in the *chiaro-oscuro*, it is not to be questioned, surpassed almost every other landscape painter.

Another writer, who appears to have possessed much feeling for the art, and who has, at the same time, displayed considerable knowledge in his treatment of the subject, seems to have entertained similar opinions respecting the merits of Claude with those expressed in the article preceding.

“ Claude,” says he, “ seems not to have availed himself of those accidental shadows that result from the intervention of clouds, which may be made to answer the best possible purposes, particularly in open scenes, which can scarcely be made to tell without them ; probably those striking effects did not suit with the tranquillity of his genius. In many of his pictures, and where, indeed, he has been most successful in the choice of objects, grandeur is often destroyed by the insipidity of the *chiaro-oscuro*. Many of his groups of trees seem introduced as substitutes for masses of shade ; the same reason has probably compelled him, as often as possible, to darken the foreground. When such expedients are not employed, there will be great danger of insipidity, as all the parts will be relieved dark off dark ; that is, every object as it comes forward will be relieved by its being stronger coloured, which will be the progress from the remote distance to the foreground, and will be as tiresome to the eye, as a monotonous discourse is to the ear. This sort of treatment will by no means suit with the grand, where every means ought to be used to raise the subject, and which can only be done by pro-

* Practice in Drawing and Painting in Water Colours, by F. Nicholson.

ducing the most striking effect, so as to fix the mind to the picture only. In this Rubens was particularly successful, by introducing bursts of light, rainbows, storms, &c. so as violently to arrest the mind of the spectator, making his picture carry with it an interest beyond the mere mechanical representation of nature. This is not the case with the more ordinary pictures, which only interest for the touch, colour, or, as in some of the Dutch works, by the wonderful shine of the kitchen utensils, the whole merit of which depends on the closeness of the imitation, and this fixes the mind merely on the painter, whose duty it should be, in the higher walks of the art, to make the spectator forget him as much as possible in the contemplation of his labours. Some of our artists are so fond of execution, that their handling attracts the attention even in subjects they mean as efforts of the sublime. Woollet's print after Wilson will be worth consulting for the fine light and shade."*

* The Works of the late Edward Dayes.

CHAP. IV.

DIFFERENT ACCOUNTS PUBLISHED RESPECTING WILSON.—SUPPLEMENT TO PILKINGTON'S DICTIONARY OF PAINTERS AND ENGRAVERS.—CAREY'S THOUGHTS.—ARCHITECTURAL DECORATIONS.—BRYAN'S DICTIONARY.—JEALOUSIES EXISTING AMONG ARTISTS IN WILSON'S TIME.—MR. FIELD.—APOLOGY FOR WILSON'S DEFICIENCY IN SUAIVITY OF MANNERS.—COMPARISON BETWEEN CLAUDE AND WILSON.

IN the foregoing pages the writer has attempted to show in what the true principles of landscape painting are admitted to consist, and has made it appear, he is willing to hope, in a manner the most satisfactory, that Wilson's pictures have been produced in conformity with those principles. When we take into consideration the extraordinary powers and attainments which the artist must necessarily possess, in order to his being capable of producing such sublime and inestimable productions, and the great difficulties which invariably attend their accomplishment, we cannot but be sensible in what an eminent degree we stand indebted to those distinguished painters who have so meritoriously furnished them, and how justly worthy at the same time their memory is of our highest veneration and respect. Men of this description rarely in their life-time obtain that reward, or that distinction, which their abilities entitle them to receive; and in the unfortunate instance before us, we have a sad proof to what an extent may be experienced the neglect and indifference of the public; and how, in a less enlightened age than this, (for in such matters the public are ever guided by the opinions of a few,) the most valuable works of art have been lightly esteemed, in the production of pictures similar to which talents the most transcendant and multiform, together with exertions the most strenuous and unremitted, have, alone, the very slightest chance of being successfully employed.

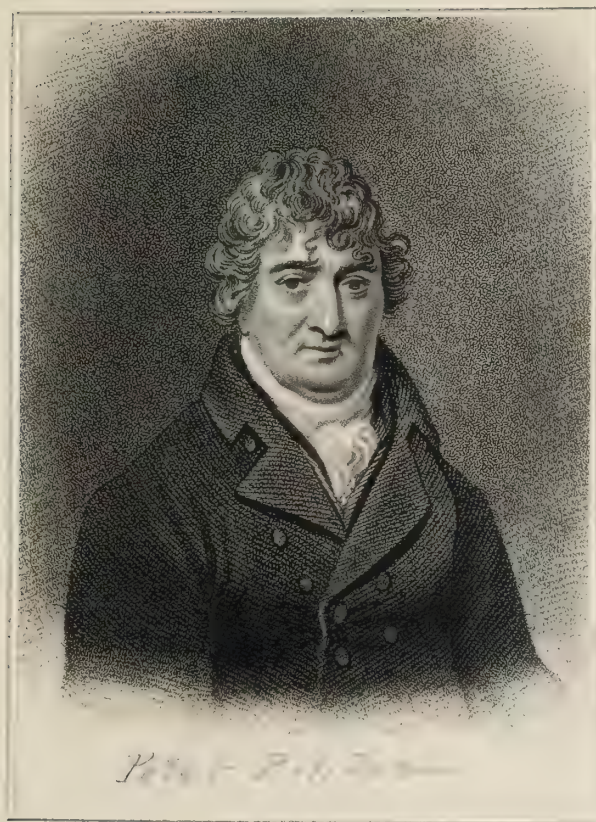
To indulge in expressions of commiseration for the hard fate of this individual, would tend to very little purpose ; all that remains now to be done, is for us, who derive so much pleasure and advantage from his works, to be no longer backward in paying to the memory of this great man that just tribute of our applause which it was not his fate to enjoy.

As it is the writer's earnest desire in thus venturing to make up in some measure for a deficiency so justly deserving of reproach, and which, although it be universally acknowledged, he sees no prospect of being otherwise supplied, since the contemporaries of Wilson have now nearly all of them disappeared from the scene*, he should be sorry that any thing were omitted, which might, in the very slightest degree, contribute to set forth the value and excellence of our great countryman's works ; and as his merits have been more or less successfully pointed out in the writings of men eminently distinguished by their pens, he will subjoin the various accounts which have been offered to our notice, (with, perhaps, an occasional observation or two of his own,) respecting this artist, as far, at least, as he has been able to collect them ; in order to bring together, as it were, into a focus, whatever might be judged worthy of repetition or record, on a subject so highly interesting to all real lovers of the art.

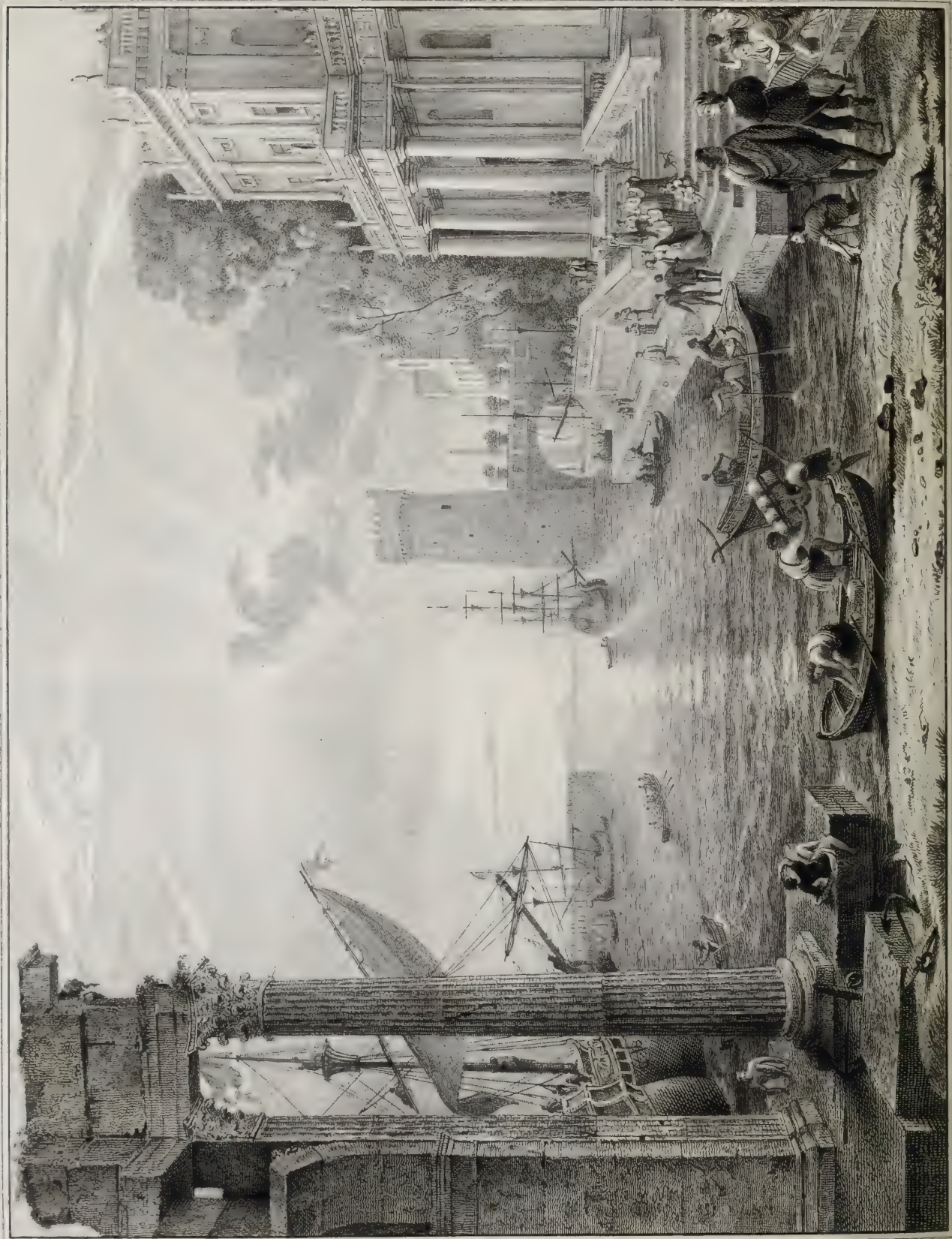
The account of Wilson's life, given, as it has been supposed, by his friend, Dr. Walcott, in the supplement to the new edition of Pilkington's Dictionary of Painters, will be the first to be introduced.

“ It may be said of this artist, ‘ nil molitur inepte.’ His taste was so exquisite, and his eye so chaste, that whatever came from his easel bore the stamp of elegance and truth. The subjects he chose were such as did a credit to his judgment. They were the selections of taste ; and whether of the simple, the elegant, or the sublime,

* As the late Mr. Farrington, a pupil of Wilson, was known to have collected a considerable mass of materials concerning the artists of his time, it was generally expected that something respecting his master would have been given by him to the public, and to which he had been very frequently urged by the entreaty of his friends.







they were treated with equal felicity. Indeed he possessed that versatility of power as to be one minute an eagle, sweeping the heavens, and the next a wren, twittering a simple note on the humble thorn.

“ His colouring was in general vivid and natural ; his touch spirited and free ; his composition simple and elegant ; his lights and shadows broad and well distributed ; his middle tints in perfect harmony, while his forms in general produced a pleasing expression.

“ Wilson has been called the English Claude ; but how unjustly, so totally different their style ! To draw a parallel between the two artists, we should say that the Frenchman too often fatigues by the detail ; he enters too far into the minutiae of nature ;—he painted her littlenesses. Wilson, on the contrary, gives a breadth to nature, and adopts only those features that more eminently attract attention. Claude, proud of showing to the world the truth of his eye, in regard to ærial perspective, produces a number of petty parts, paltry projections, such as hedges, banks, hillocks, &c. to prove his power in a certain department of painting, which, though far from contemptible, is very distant from the higher order of the art. Claude introduces at times groups of unmeaning and uninteresting figures, while Wilson introduces a paucity, but such as are not only appropriate to the scene, but form a part of the composition. The mind of Wilson was that of a classic ; the mind of Claude of a mechanic, dead to the energies of classic sensibility. The pencil of Claude was capable only of describing the general appearances of nature ; that of Wilson to clothe them with elegance and grandeur. Claude, possessing no abstract idea of beauty, was confined to the individual merit of the scene ; Wilson, on the contrary, gifted with the charming *ideal*, could fascinate by combination. Claude was a pretty simple country girl ; Wilson was a beauty of a higher order, commanding the graces, and uniting them to simplicity. Claude sometimes painted grand scenes, but without a mind of grandeur ; Wilson, on the contrary, could infuse a grandeur into the meanest objects ; Claude, when he drew on the bank of his own ideas, was a mere *castrato* in the art ; witness his landing of Æneas in Italy. How poverty-

struck the scene !—an enterprise destitute of motion,—a few clumsy vessels, with a few figures, more resembling Dutch hoys, unloading at a London wharf, than ships arriving with an army to form the Roman empire, and give a race to immortality. Wilson, on the contrary, was a *Hercules*. When his subject was grand, he clothed it with thunder ; witness his Celadon and Amelia, his Niobe, &c. To compare their works that demanded imagination, were to draw a parallel between strength and imbecility ; the two miserable statues of Johnson and Howard in St. Paul's cathedral, and the labours of Praxiteles. Claude was rather the plain and minute *historian of landscape* ; Wilson was the *poet*."

In "The Works of the late Mr. Edward Dayes," among other "Professional Sketches of Modern Artists," are to be found the following observations, under the title of "Wilson," viz.

"This giant of the English school was very unfortunate in his day, as many of the pictures that he sold for six or seven guineas, now fetch fifty or sixty ; but his works are now better understood, and will continue to be admired, whilst mind is considered as a test of excellence in art.

"In the *chiaro-oscuro* and colour, he was all that Sir Joshua was ; in both he was consummately skilled ; and in the former he surpassed every other landscape painter. The shadows are always broad and massy. His forms are grand, majestic, and well selected ; and his compositions are not encumbered with a multitude of parts, a fault frequently observed in Claude, whose subjects often appear studied, or, in other words, over-laboured, from the introduction of too many beautiful parts.

"Wilson's compositions are grand, with a tone of colour truly Titianesque, and a light and shade unequalled ; indeed it is a tribute to the memory of Wilson, (and, perhaps, it were not improper to add the *Great*,) to say, his colouring is always agreeable, and sometimes fine ; his compositions equal to most, and his light and shade superior to any other landscape painter.

“ Among his most classical compositions, are to be ranked that with the story of Meleager; the Ceyx and Alcyone, engraved by Woollet; and the fine one of Niobe, by Smith.”

The observations which follow, are selected from a small publication, entitled “ Carey’s Thoughts,” printed at Manchester in 1808.

“ If other great masters,” says this writer, “ possessed superior advantages of education, Wilson enjoyed, in the highest degree, the power of discrimination; of seizing upon the grand features of nature, and tinging them with the genuine hue of the hour and season. His objects exhibit the largest forms; his colouring and effect, the simplest modifications, and the most expansive breadth, compatible with veracity. In the materials of his composition, in his mode of thinking, and of handling of his pictures, he differs essentially from Claude; but in the expression of the sun and air he is equal to that artist, and often superior to every other master. In whatever passed from his hand, whether a first lay-in tint upon the canvass, a slight sketch, or a finished picture; a local view, or a grand composition; the subordination of parts is perfect, the objects are surrounded with atmosphere, and clothed in light.

“ As the detail of local colours was incompatible with the breadth of his masses, and the grandeur of his effect, in his superior compositions, his hues are general. But there is a freshness in the shadowy verdure of his landscape, and a living glow in his skies, which produce all the effect of detail upon the eye.

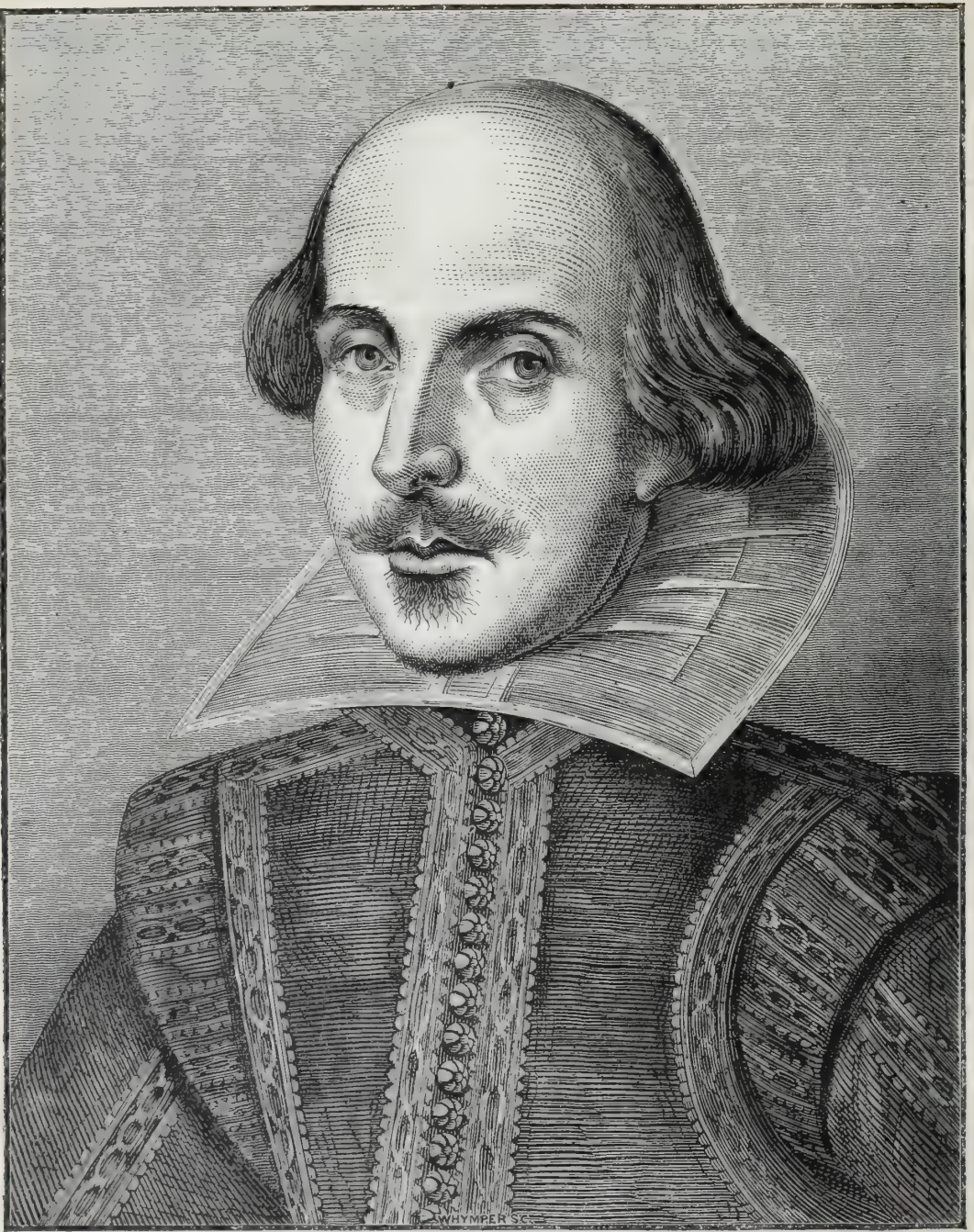
“ In subjects purely local, with less grandeur, his colouring has more sweetness, more attention to detail, and more variety. His best pictures of this class, in touch, in lucid azure of the skies, and in the dewy tints of the landscape, resemble the pictures of Zucarelli. In other respects they are very different. No artist could give so many charms to the lovely serenity of a rural scene, as that Italian; but beyond the soothing view of village or pastoral life, and the cloudless tranquillity of a May-day, his bland imagination never freely wandered. Although in the form of his trees, in ideas of colour, and composition, Wilson varies materially from Titian and

Rubens ; in decision of touch, and dauntless power of execution, he is entitled to rank with those great masters.

“ So perfect was his sense of colour and effect, so quick the impression of the whole scene upon his eye, so voluble and full of character his pencil, that his pictures appear as if they had been produced without effort. In this he is superior to Claude, whose toil is visible amidst all the beauty and sublimity of his effect ; but the power which gives birth to the grandeur and sublimity of Wilson is unseen. Such, indeed, is their charm in this respect, that they appear to have been effected without toil or prior study, by a single movement of his mind. I do not mean to imply that this was the case, or that he did not study ; but that he had the rare talent of so completely veiling his efforts, that in contemplating his best pictures, we forget the painter. In the pictures on which he exerted himself, he manifested a superior power ; but, it appears to me, that his mind was not always on the stretch ; either he was naturally indolent, or disgusted with the bad taste of the public, which gave a preference to the *Smiths* of Chichester ; he occasionally relaxed his exertions.

“ That an artist who feels himself neglected, and his best works disregarded or condemned, should occasionally become supine, and retort neglect upon the public, by painting with less exertion of mind and pencil, cannot be deemed very improbable ; accordingly, some of his smaller pictures are of ordinary materials, and have little to recommend them but the charms of his colour and the vivacity of his pencil.

“ In what may be called the learning of his art, architectural introductions, ancient ruins, and classic embellishments, he is surpassed by Gaspar and Nicolo Poussin, by Grimaldi Bolonese, the Carracci, Domenichino, and by Claude. But this circumstance is no proof of natural inferiority in Wilson. The majority of these artists began to acquire that species of knowledge early, and they continued their acquisitions through the whole of their course. They lived upon classic ground, among a people who loved art, and honoured its pro-



PORTRAIT BY MARTIN DROESHOUT IN FIRST FOLIO EDITION.

fessors; and wherever they turned, the fairest remains of Grecian and Roman art met their eyes. Urns and columns, statues, ruined temples, theatres, and other public edifices, the noblest monuments of ancient architecture, invited them to study, and furnished the most splendid materials of success.

“Contemplating such objects continually, designing from them in different views, and under every effect of light and shadow, they every hour acquired a higher sense of the highest order of forms, or, in the schoolboy’s phrase, got them off by heart, and had them ready at all times, to pour upon the canvass, in the moment of composition.

“If, in the celebrated passage from Shakspeare, we take away

‘The cloud-capp’d towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples,’

by so doing we strip

‘the great globe itself’

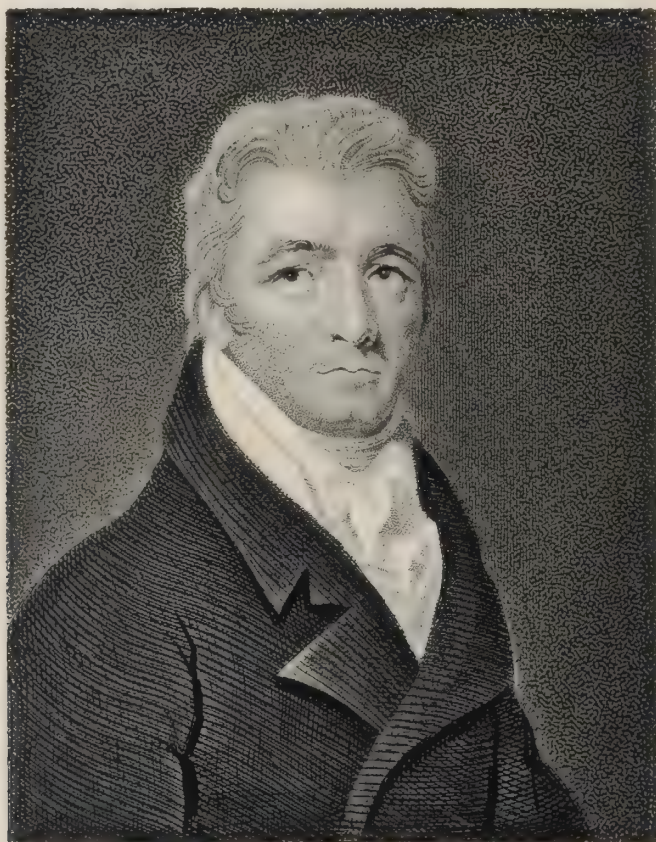
of its grandeur, and the description loses its elevation. In the higher class of landscape, the effect of architectural pomp is precisely the same. Remove the ruined temples, palaces, and columns; and you strip the scene of its most solemn and imposing feature. You exhibit a naked nature, which, however wild or grand, will have lost its chief power over the heart. Let a person of taste examine the grandest landscapes of Nicolo Poussin, or any of the masters already mentioned, and he will find that, like Shakspeare’s ‘great globe,’ they owe a main portion of their imposing loftiness to the buildings with which they are decorated.

“Wilson did not enjoy any of these early advantages; he had the misfortune to be born in England, at a period when art was little understood, and less encouraged. His early studies, too, as a portrait painter, were unfavourable to his ultimate choice.”

From some of the observations contained in the above criticism, which, although they be written by an author possessing great knowledge in the science of *virtù*; together with a real feeling for, as well as admiration of, the works of our artist, I must entirely dissent. I

cannot, indeed, but be of opinion, that they have been penned, either without due consideration, or through the want of a sufficiently extensive acquaintance with his works ; for, so numerous are the examples which might be adduced to prove, in the most satisfactory manner, that the judgment here pronounced is not only very erroneous, but in truth, actually devoid of any foundation ; that it seems difficult to imagine how the writer, well acquainted as he shows himself to be with Wilson's manner and style of painting, could have fallen into so unaccountable an error. In order at once to evince the mistake into which this author appears to have been led, we need only to inspect a few of our artist's well known subjects, most of which, as they have been engraved, are in the hands of almost every collector. We will, for example's sake, select from a great number that might be named, the few following, viz. "The Phaëton," "The Apollo and the Seasons," "View of Rome," "Niobe" "View in Italy," from all which prints have been made ; "The Tomb of the Horatii and Curiatii," "The Broken Bridge of Narni," in my own possession ; these, with a vast number of others, contain the very finest "architectural introductions," such as the Colliseum, the Temple of the Sybil, the bridges, and magnificent remains of aqueducts about Rome, &c., no less than the greatest abundance and variety of tasteful and "classic embellishments," such as urns, tombs, ruined columns, friezes, statues, bas-reliefs, the latter of which especially are continually introduced by Wilson with singular judgment and felicity into his foregrounds.

No person, perhaps, among professed connoisseurs, is allowed to have possessed a more refined taste, a superior judgment, and, at the same time, a more extensive knowledge of pictures, than the late Mr. Bryan, author of the Dictionary of Painters and Engravers, a highly valuable work, containing the most sound and able criticism ; let us see only what this experienced observer says upon the subject in question ; and with such high authority on our side, nothing further need be said in refutation of such groundless deficiency in our countryman, who must for ever stand fairly acquitted of a charge alleged against him, doubtless without due consideration.



Richard B. Borden

“ His views in Italy,” says Mr. Bryan, under the article “ Wilson,” which will be noticed very shortly, “ are selected with judgment and taste ; and it has been justly observed that, in his pictures, the waving line of mountains which bound the distance in every point of view ; the dreary and inhospitable plains, rendered solemnly interesting by the mouldering fragments of temples, tombs, and aqueducts, are all indicated in a masterly manner, exhibiting that local character which cannot but be considered as peculiarly grand and classical.”

Mr. Bryan, in his Dictionary of Painters and Engravers, after enumerating various circumstances respecting the birth and family of Wilson, particulars which have been noticed in the foregoing pages, makes the following judicious observations, viz.

“ The talents of Wilson did not secure to him that encouragement and distinction which his abilities deserved. He was doomed to encounter the galling indifference of a tasteless public, which was probably aggravated by the jealousy and intrigues of some of the most distinguished of his contemporaries, with whom he did not live on very amicable terms. This also has been said to have partly resulted from his own conduct, which was by no means distinguished by a conciliatory disposition, or great suavity of manners.

“ Conscious of his own powers, and disdaining to sue for protectors, his transcendant abilities were suffered to exert themselves under the oppression of indigence and obscurity ; and participating the destiny of many illustrious artists who had preceded him, the beauty and value of his works were not discovered until death had rendered him equally insensible of admiration or neglect.”*

With respect to the jealousy and intrigues existing among the artists in Wilson's time, there is, it is to be feared, too much truth in what Mr. Bryan has said, and the writer would, indeed, feel himself happy were it in his power, consistently with that impartiality which fair and candid biography demands, to refrain altogether from the

* Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers.

mention of any thing connected with a subject so extremely ungracious. Unfortunately, however, such, alas ! is the frailty of human nature, the most exalted characters are not always exempt from sentiments at once so unworthy and so very humiliating ; but, whatever may have been the differences which existed between individuals, upon whom one could wish to reflect with feelings of pleasure and admiration alone, or upon what grounds such animosities may have been raised, we have little reason to doubt, that in the much to be lamented case before us, as is usual for the most part with others of a similar kind, there certainly must have been " faults on both sides."

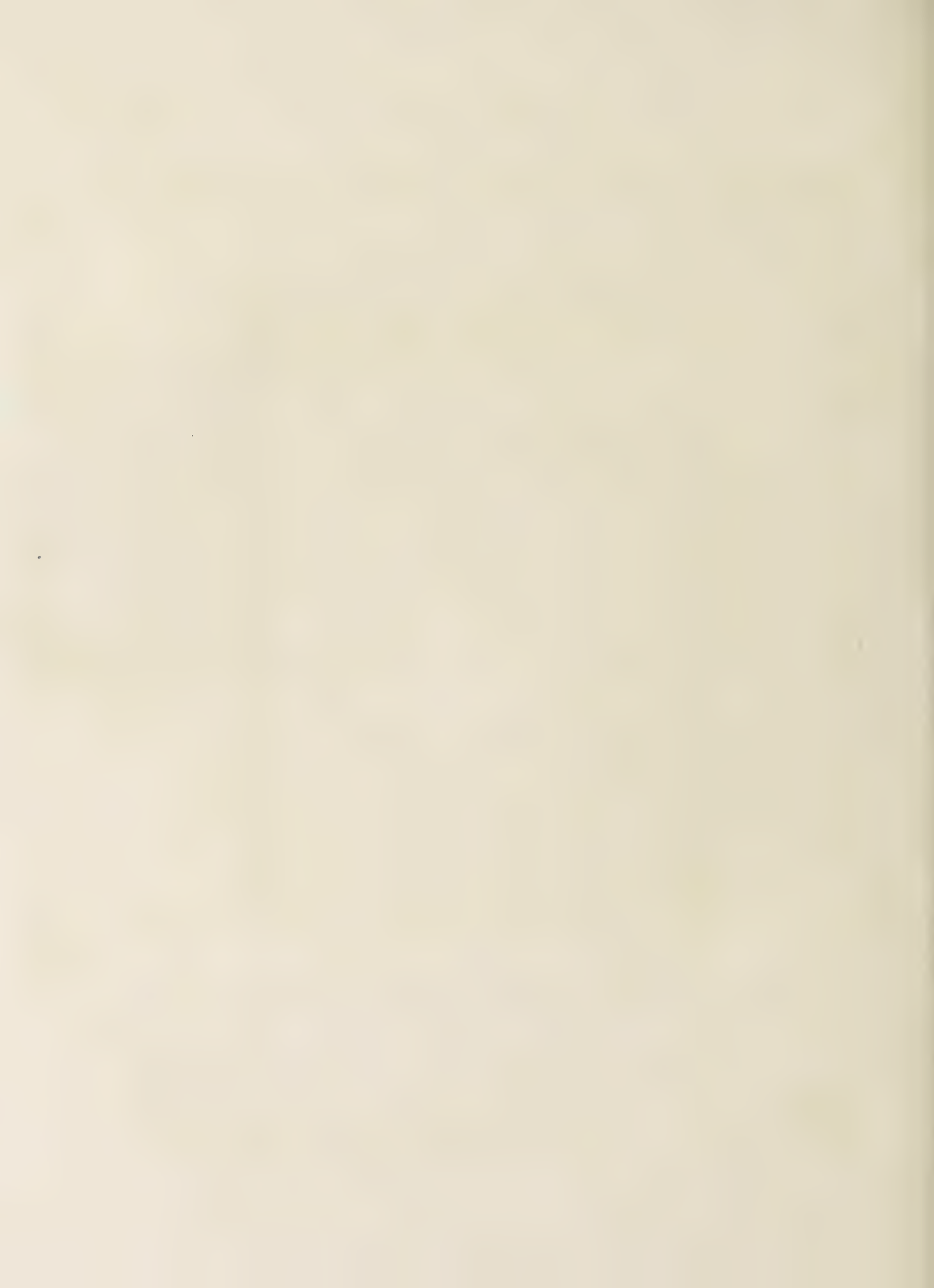
As it generally happens that the weakest, unsupported, goes to the wall, it would perhaps be little less than unfair to the memory of him in whose behalf the author has professed to stand forward, however painful, at the same time, it may prove to himself, were he on this occasion to remain silent altogether ; and although he entertains the very highest respect and veneration towards the character of Wilson's " most distinguished contemporary," and which, it is hoped, the foregoing pages sufficiently testify, nevertheless, strict justice demands that it be made to appear, however reluctantly, according to the truth, that the former, depressed and cruelly neglected as we see him to have been, was not, at least on one occasion, without a sufficient cause for the absence, in a certain degree, of " a conciliatory disposition."

In a small volume, from which have already been made several extracts, will be found the following anecdote, viz.

" Wilson and Sir Joshua Reynolds were not on the most perfect terms. When the president proposed to the Academicians to drink the health of Gainsborough, as '*our best landscape painter*,' Wilson, in his turn, retorted the health of Gainsborough, as '*our best portrait painter*.' Wilson was, however, liberal to his brother artists, and revered the powers of Wright of Derby highly."* This last-men-

* Carey's Thoughts.





tioned circumstance, it must be allowed, cannot but be considered as a decisive proof of the liberality of Wilson's mind, that artist having been at the very time a competitor, with greater success, though possessed of far inferior abilities, in a similar branch of the art with himself. The anecdote related above was too generally known at the period when it occurred, and has been too much talked of since, to admit a doubt of its being true. That it took place, however, on so public an occasion as an academy dinner, there is every reason for believing must be a mistake.

Since writing the foregoing particulars, the author has been favoured with some further anecdotes, and other valuable information respecting Wilson, and for which he stands indebted to Mr. Field ; a gentleman, who besides his real fondness for the art, and the very high respect he entertains for the subject of his obliging communication, appears to have had all his life a most extensive acquaintance with the artists of his day. As his account is interesting, and at the same time occasionally accompanied with very suitable reflections, which bespeak both a well informed mind and a truly benevolent feeling, it can appear perhaps in no shape so well as in the writer's own expressive and excellent words. For the extraordinary and polite attention of this gentleman, the author feels himself most highly indebted, and which is indeed deserving of his very warmest acknowledgments, insomuch as neither pains or trouble appear to have been spared in his friendly endeavours to procure information respecting our artist, he having sought to obtain it in every possible quarter in which there appeared the smallest chance of any thing of the kind to be found. Artists, picture-dealers, colourmen, &c. &c., have all been subject to the interrogatories of this most zealous and indefatigable friend.

“ Wilson,” observes this gentleman, “ was conscious of his merits, and not of the most bending disposition, with a mind well cultivated. It may be questioned, therefore, after all, whether he did not become a martyr to a principle of disdaining to humble himself

to those, however superior to himself in rank or riches, who measure by inches, and value by pounds. He returned from Italy, impressed with his own powers, and in some contempt, not perhaps totally unmerited, of his contemporaries. His return excited some interest, and much criticism in the coteries of art, at that time ; and those artists, &c., who then constituted themselves what they called a *Committee of Taste*, and led the understanding of the public in art, sat in judgment several times upon him, and came to a resolution, purporting — *That the manner of Mr. Wilson was not suited to the English taste, and that if he hoped for patronage he must change it for the lighter style of Zucarelli.* They voted also, in friendliness to Mr. W., that Mr. Penny (the academician who painted a fac-simile of the Death of Wolfe, &c.) should be deputed to communicate the resolution to Mr. W., which was done accordingly. Wilson, who was painting at the time, heard it in silence, went on with his work, but soon turned round, and very coolly, and in the most contemptuous manner, gave such an answer to Mr. Penny, as sufficiently showed the thorough indifference in which he held this self-constituted Committee of Taste.

“ Notwithstanding the contempt which he showed for this decision upon the merit of his works, Wilson is said to have taken the hint in improving his style ; a strong proof of the power of his judgment colliding against the hard substance of his temperament and prejudice, for he had looked with partiality at the sombre Rembrandt. The committee struck a light, and Wilson made a constellation of it. It showed that gentle usage might have tamed the lion, and conferred the fame of an Orpheus upon some happy patron. Unhappy, indeed, is the man, however exalted his rank, who, having the power and opportunity, wants the judgment to smoothen the way of a Wilson.

“ Alas ! he was too great to grovel ; he felt that the paltry distinctions of fortune sunk into contempt before the riches of the mind. He wanted that yielding spirit which is due from the indi-



Engraved by T. Woodman

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vidual to the order of society and his own happiness, and disregarded the sober conformity of his better judgment to the ways of the world.

“ Upon this fatal reply to the message of the committee may have greatly depended the ill success of his future endeavours, to which he became a martyr. The members opposed him with his patrons, which, added to his spurning, rather than conciliating, the esteem of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the want of the better judgment in society which now prevails, proved fatal to him.

“ As the fortunes of Wilson declined (I had it from one who, when living, knew him intimately,) his manners and language became gross and depraved; of which his appearance, as he grew old, partook. His nose became very large and red, so much so, that boys in the street would call after him ‘ *Nosey*,’ with which he was greatly annoyed.

“ These adverse points in the person and character of Wilson, arose probably from a degradation as naturally attendant upon sinking into poverty, as their antagonist vices are upon the degenerating influence of extreme riches; and are too salutary and instructive to be lost sight of morally, even in the character of the most eminent.

“ Old Mr. Taylor, who copied the portrait after Mengs, under Wilson’s own eye, says it was the custom, according to the sociable manner of the day, for himself, Wilson, Hayman, Dr. Chauncey, and other artists and gentlemen attached to literature and art, to hold a meeting or club at the Turk’s Head, in Gerrard Street, at which half a pint of wine was the allowance, and it was never observed that Wilson (however irregular on other occasions) was to be tempted to exceed this quantity. It was here that Hayman, one evening, rallying Wilson, by assigning to him the palm of dissoluteness, was retorted upon by Dr. Chauncey, to whom he had appealed, by the reply, ‘ It must be confessed, Hayman, that what you say of Wilson would be true, if we put yourself out of the question.’

“ The Turk’s Head, in Gerrard Street, was celebrated for two clubs or societies, the one literary, the other of artists; and Wilson

would, in his characteristic manner, point out to a brother artist any unknown member of the former, who chanced to pass, by whispering, ‘There goes one of the *Sapientia*.’ Trivial as such expressions may appear, they are indicative of the character and manner of the man—they are often free notices of internal feeling.

“At one of the meetings at the Turk’s Head, Cosway, the Academician, who had been at court, attended in all the gay costume of the drawing-room, with pink heels to his shoes, &c., but the room was so full he could not find a place. ‘What,’ said Frank Hayman, ‘can nobody make room for the little monkey?’ Wilson laughed, and exclaimed, ‘Good G—d! how times and circumstances are changed; sure, the world is turned topsy-turvy,—formerly, the monkey rode the bear, but here we have the bear upon the monkey.’ This set the table in a roar, in which Hayman joined heartily, and rising, shook hands with Cosway, who received him with the greatest familiarity and politeness, and instantly every chair in the room was at his service.

“Does not this speak volumes in favour of the feelings of all parties? Is it not the way to that communion of minds, which, by gentle collision, promotes the polish, and sharpens the wits, of man? Oppose it to our refinement in manners;—how miserable is the contrast of that morbid military sensibility and barbarous politeness, which puts down collision of mind, and might, in the above case, have deprived society of the lives and talents of two worthy men?

“Of another class was the satire of Zoffani, in his picture of the Royal Academy, in which he introduced portraits of all the academicians, and a no very favourable one of Wilson, with a pot of porter by him. Wilson accordingly treated it in a different way, by taking a stick, and swearing he would give Zoffani a sound thrashing; and he would have kept his word, if Zoffani had not prudently painted it out.

“Wilson’s pupil, Mr. Jones, having invited him to view a large landscape he had painted, Wilson went to see it. ‘Well, Mr. Jones,’ said Wilson, ‘what have you been doing?’ ‘Here is my picture,



Engraved by Rudley from an Original by Sir William Beechey

Sir William Beechey.

Sir,' replied Jones. 'Stole my temple, Mr. Jones,' said Wilson. 'Do you think it too dark, Mr. Wilson?' enquired Jones. 'Black enough of all conscience, Mr. Jones,' replied Wilson. 'Good morning, Mr. Jones,' and away he went; for Jones's *sacrilege* had offended him.

"Sir William Beechey, as he himself has informed me, having on one occasion invited Wilson to dine; before he consented, he thus sounded his way. — 'You have some daughters, Mr. Beechey?' 'Yes, Sir.' 'Well, do they draw? All the young ladies learn to draw now.' 'No, Sir, they are musical.' This was very well; his rough honesty dreaded an exhibition of performances in his art, which might place him in the dilemma of praising untruly, or condemning offensively; and the heart cannot but applaud his motive. Sir Joshua, with more gentlemanly humanity and less rigid morality, got out of the dilemma on such occasions, by uniformly saying, 'Very pretty! very pretty!' Hard, indeed, and frequent are those cases, in which a man cannot make his conscience comport truly with his humanity; hence we may often pardon the weakness, while we condemn the motive; something is to be conceded to the imperfection of our nature.

"At other times of his visiting Sir W. Beechey, which he frequently did of an evening, he would rarely take any thing more than a sandwich, without wine or ardent spirit; but if a tankard of porter, with a toast in it, were placed before him, it was irresistible, and he would partake of it when he had refused every thing else, but not to excess. On these occasions he said very little.

"Sir William thinks the portrait by Mengs must have been very like him, when younger. Afterwards his nose grew very large, and that and his chin very red, so much so, as to attract notice in the street, to avoid which, he walked with a handkerchief to his face. His lips were thin and compressed.

"Mr. Newman, the colourman, recollects him well, and supplied him with pencils and brushes; but of these very few were sufficient; for the mechanism of Wilson's painting was extremely simple, and

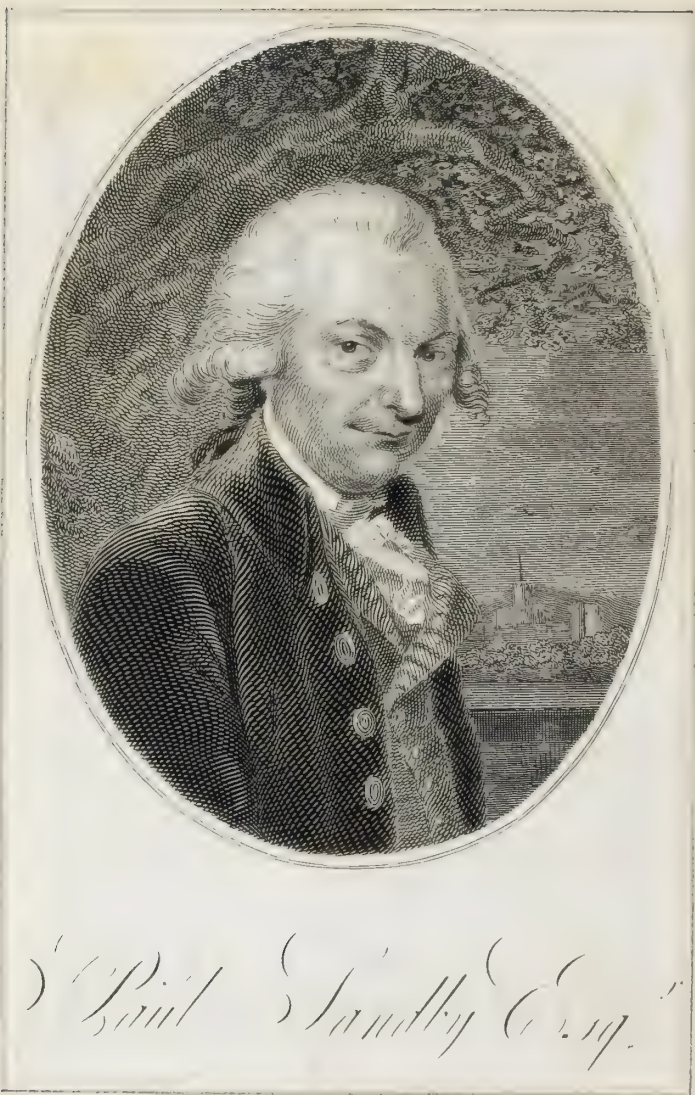
his colours few. With these, and one pencil only, he painted standing, made a touch or two, and then walked to the window to refresh his eye, which was extremely delicate, and critically nice for colour. I have this account of his painting principally from Sir William Beechey, who has often seen him paint, and to whom he was particularly attached during the latter years of his life. Sir William, with his wonted good-humour, not only described by words, but acted his manner at the easel.

“ In painting he frequently receded from his picture to view it, and he one day drew Sir William Beechey by the arm to the further corner of the room, observing, ‘ This is where you should view a painting, with your eyes, and not with your nose.’ ‘ And there, indeed,’ said Sir William, ‘ the effect was prodigious ;’ for at this time his sight and touch were declining, and he painted coarsely. He did not, however, paint from feeling only, he had principles which actuated his hand to the last, which he would not communicate ; they were to be sought, like those of nature, in his practice, and from his performances. He was taciturn and sententious, and though not of gentle speech or demeanour, and although disappointed and soured in mind, he did not indulge in calumny, nor question the dispensations of Providence ; which denotes in him a natural benevolence of heart.

“ He had a clear and confident presentiment that posterity would do him justice, and often told Sir W. Beechey he would live to see when Barret’s pictures (which were then in high esteem) would fetch nothing, and that great prices would be given for his own.

“ Sir William says he thinks he might have starved, if the situation of librarian to the Royal Academy, to which he did honour by his education and abilities, had not been conferred upon him. It was worth about fifty pounds per annum, and his manner of living was very poor, and not at all beyond it.

“ Previously to his finally leaving London, which took place in consequence of the death of his brother, who left him an estate, on which it turned out there was a lead mine, he went to take leave of



Col Sandby Esq.

Sir William, and though he was in pretty good spirits at the prospect of comfort before him, his faculties and health were much impaired, and he put his hands on each side of his back, in which he suffered at the time, and, with a shake of the head, said, very expressively, ‘ Oh, these back settlements of mine !’

“ He was anxious and in haste to get into the country, but the journey proved an effort beyond his age and infirmities, which, aided, perhaps, by the sudden burst of the warm radiance of his setting sun upon the gloom of his past day, was too much for him, and he lived only to enjoy the satisfaction (for such all men feel it) of laying his bones in his native country with the decencies of affluence about him, and a rising generation ready to strew flowers, and sing a requiem to his remains.

“ When distress compelled Wilson to sell drawings which he had executed, at half a crown apiece, Paul Sanby paid him for a great number with a juster estimation of their worth, and with a liberality creditable to his memory and feelings as an artist.

“ A few shillings purchased, in Drury Lane, all the implements and relics of the art and property of this inestimable artist.

“ I have heard many anecdotes respecting Wilson, previously to those which I have lately obtained,” continues Mr. Field, “ but do not remember them very distinctly : unfortunately Freebairn, and several of his pupils, with whom I was acquainted, have followed their master out of a world adorned with all conceivable beauties, and goods innumerable, though disregarded, and dispensed in vain in behoof of folly and ingratitude. It is pleasing to sustain, even temporarily, any thing relating to one who felt so natively, and knew how to generalise one class of these beauties so admirably, as Wilson, who was himself an eminent instance of the above position ; since his excellence surpassed that of all preceding artists in his department, and yet the society he adorned was nearly insensible to merits, and ungratefully rejected the man and his works. Nevertheless, he has raised a school of landscape painters in this country that will bear the palm from the world ; and it is due to the late Dr.

Walcott to state, that we owe the present reputation of Wilson's works to his discernment and enthusiastic admiration of them.

"It is worthy of observation," continues this intelligent gentleman, "that none of Wilson's pupils* caught the manner of the master, and yet a school has arisen which strongly partakes of it, of which the drawings of my early acquaintance, the generous and giddy Tom Girtin is an eminent instance.

"The admirable Calcott and Mr. Turner may be said to be of the same school, as may also the train of eminent landscape draughtsmen of the present day.

"Is not this," observes Mr. Field, "a strong presumption that the spirit of mind is to be kindled in minds of kindred spirits only, and not to be communicated by the touch or hand of the master himself?

"I don't know if it has appeared in print, but the tale has often been told, that when Gainsborough came to London, the mentioning by Sir Joshua, in presence of Wilson, at the Turk's Head, that *the first landscape painter* in England was come to town, was sarcastically answered by Wilson, 'you mean *the best portrait painter*, Sir Joshua;' the story is a strong evidence, at least, of the merits of Gainsborough.

"Though Wilson could not in general bear to hear Sir Joshua Reynolds named with approbation as a painter, yet he is known to have relaxed this severity of his prejudice when under the influence of gratitude to Sir Joshua, for his having procured him an order, by his recommendation, to paint two pictures for a nobleman;—a conduct, on each side, worthy of the hearts of these great artists."

Such are the particulars furnished by this very able and interesting writer. The author could, indeed, were he so inclined, add to the above a variety of sore and bitter reflections, which have come to his knowledge, as having been thrown out between the hostile parties in their day; but he refrains from the mention of any thing further

* For the names of some of Wilson's pupils, vide Appendix C.



Engraved from the original

Thomas Gray

respecting so unpleasant a subject, upon the consideration, that such littlenesses, unbecoming as they are of great and liberal minds, are to be looked upon as belonging only to the weakness of our nature, and, as such, far better buried in oblivion. And there let them rest, nor further let us seek,

“ To draw their frailties from their dread abode.”

GRAY.

That Wilson may not have been distinguished by the suavity of his manners, or the refinement of his address, there is, it is impossible to be denied, every reason to believe. We cannot, however, but be of opinion, that had the works of our artist been fortunate enough to have obtained that notice which they so well deserved, instead of “ the galling indifference they were doomed to encounter,” he, himself, by a more favourable introduction into the world, might have reaped those advantages which polished society affords, and in which the plebeian roughness of his character must naturally have become softened and refined. For with an intellect active and elevated like his, we may rest assured, that materials productive of observation and improvement in every way, and those of no ordinary kind, must necessarily have been as inherent in him, as they are usually found to be in the generality of men. May it not then be fairly concluded, that these very materials were remaining dormant only, and unused, merely because they never had been properly called forth, occasioned by the lamentable want of that fostering hand, and that conciliating encouragement, which prosperity, arising from success, especially in intellectual pursuits, seldom fails to command? For it does not appear, from any thing that the writer has been able to discover concerning him, that Wilson was by nature deficient in the kindlier affections, or in gentleness of disposition; what impediment, therefore, may it be asked, could there possibly have been to his deriving the same degree of profit from the society of men, versed in the manners of the world, and to his having attained the same refinement, supposing the experiment to have been tried, as that which we every day witness in our other

artists? And what was there, allowing the advantages and the opportunities to have been the same, which should have prevented him from acquiring manners equally polished with those of a Reynolds, a Lawrence, or a Shee? Most assuredly, there could have been no impediment at all.

Let us not then impute to Wilson as a crime, imperfections, which so far from being the consequence of any natural deficiency or perversion of mind, were, as it very evidently appears, the result of those peculiar circumstances only under which it was his misfortune to be placed; and which, as we all very well know, the advantages of polished society alone can at any time be expected to remove.

And yet, after all, from every enquiry the author has been able to make, either from books or from persons now living, who were acquainted with Wilson, it would seem, that the complaints so frequently urged against him on account of his manner and behaviour, have reference to that period of life only (Wilson was ten years older than Sir Joshua Reynolds) when, bowed down by misfortune, his spirit was broken and his energies subdued.

Of his demeanour at an earlier age, when, aspiring to fame, fortune held out to him the flattering prospect of success, nothing in the shape of authenticity, beyond what we already know, appears likely now to be ascertained. We have it, however, on good authority, as noticed in the early part of this memoir, that Wilson associated with good company during the time that he resided at Rome, and that with Vernet, who was a man of polish, and much noticed by the great, he was certainly on intimate terms; from which circumstances alone, we may very fairly infer, that his manners had not been always repulsive, or his behaviour morose and austere. What, in fact, will not the accumulated pressure of miscarriage, mortification, and stern poverty effect, upon a mind even of a much less sensitive cast? Or how can it be supposed possible for any human being, though possessed of the very firmest resources which philosophy is able to supply, to maintain a temper at all times serene and un-



Martin Arthur Gee

ruffled, when preyed upon by the irritating feelings which a long and painful series of unmerited disappointments and cruel neglect could not fail to produce ; and which, as has been shown, every day occurrences, as unlooked for as they were vexatious and undeserved, conspired only to kindle and sustain ?

When it is taken into consideration, that all these various hardships and aggravating circumstances were incessantly acting upon a mind no less elevated than refined, fully conscious, at the same time, of the superiority and extent of the powers it possessed, we can hardly be surprised that the spirit of the man was subdued, that his dignity became degraded, and his very nature debased.

More, it may possibly be thought, has been said upon this subject than the occasion might require, though not more, the writer is willing to hope, than is justified by the merits of the case. Feeling so thoroughly convinced, that the treatment which, in his lifetime, this distinguished artist experienced from the ungrateful public of the day, was no less unjust, than it was aggravating and unkind, the author cannot answer it to himself, now that he has ventured upon so important and so responsible a task, as that in which he is at present engaged, to allow that the memory of one so well born, so well educated, and, at his first setting out, so well introduced into the world, — one whom we know to have been most diligent in the pursuit after that excellence to which he so eminently attained, — without having, at the same time, any known vice or immorality laid to his charge, should be handed down to posterity as a “ misanthrope,” — “ a cynic,” — “ a porter-drinker,” — “ a coarse man, whom one would take for the landlord of a public-house,” — a “ mine host,” &c. &c. ; — this indeed would be most unpardonable and unfair.

Instead, therefore, of passing an opinion too hasty or inconsiderate, respecting a character so much deserving of our commiseration, it will be far more becoming in us, while we look upon his failings in a less unfavourable and rather in a compassionate point of view, to ascribe, as we most justly may, that harshness of demean-

our, which has been complained of, to its only true and very obvious cause; viz. to that same “galling indifference,” as Mr. Bryan expresses it, and that ungrateful neglect, which it was his sad lot to experience from the undiscerning public of the day. To sum up all, we may, with the strictest justice, say of this most distinguished, though very unfortunate artist, in the words of our immortal bard, that

“ He was a man, setting his fate aside,
Of comely virtues.”

Timon of Athens.

As the names of Wilson and Sir Joshua Reynolds have been so very frequently coupled together in the course of this work, the author will add a short comparative statement respecting them; for, though his readers are well aware of these painters having been contemporaries, they may not, perhaps, be acquainted with the peculiar, and somewhat curious, coincidence of circumstances belonging to them, as set forth in the following particulars:—

Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

Born	-	-	-	-	1723
Went to Italy		-	-	-	1749
Remained in Italy	3 years.				
Returned to England		-		-	1752
Died, aged 69		-	-	-	1792

WILSON.

Born	-	-	-	-	1713
Went to Italy		-	-	-	1749
Remained in Italy	6 years.				
Returned to England		-		-	1755
Died, aged 69		-	-	-	1782

But to proceed with Mr. Bryan's account of our artist.

“ In the Supplement to Pilkington's Dictionary of Painters, published in 1798,” continues this writer, “ a prejudiced and an absurd parallel is drawn between the works of Claude Lorraine and those of Wilson, whilst it is, at the same time, admitted that their



styles were so different, that no comparison of them can be justly made. The slightest inspection of his works will convince us of the originality of his style. In his studies in Italy, he wisely avoided all imitation of the artists of that country, who had preceded him, and he adopted a manner peculiarly his own, which was not less original than varied and interesting. His views in Italy are selected with judgment and taste, and it has been justly observed, ‘ that in his pictures, the waving line of mountains which bound the distance in every point of view ; the dreary and inhospitable plains, rendered solemnly interesting by the mouldering fragments of temples, tombs, and aqueducts, are all indicated in a masterly manner, exhibiting that local character which cannot but be considered as peculiarly grand and classical.’*

“ In his English pictures he is particularly successful in the fresh and dewy brightness he has given to his verdure ; and though being sometimes employed to paint particular views which were less picturesque than he would have selected, and consequently partook of the formality of portraiture, they are always treated with taste and ingenuity. For the satisfaction of collectors, it may not be improper to notice his frequent repetition of the same subject or view, as there are several of his pictures which he has repeated three or four times, with little or no variation ; a circumstance which has, sometimes, given rise to a suspicion of the originality of some of his works, which are really the production of his pencil.”†

Among those pictures which more particularly furnish examples of such repetitions, may be mentioned the following, viz. “ Speculum Dianæ, or The Lake of Nemi ;” “ Cicero’s Villa ;” “ Solitude ;” “ Mæcenæ’s Villa ;” “ Niobe ;” the large black rock, with a cross upon it, at the foot of which are figures at worship, engraved by Roberts ; “ Sion House,” on the Thames ; “ Phaëton ;” a “ River Scene,” in which is introduced a white cow among the trees on the

* This quotation by Mr. Bryan is from Edwards’s Anecdotes of Painters.

† Bryan’s Dictionary of Painters and Engravers.

left side. An example of the subject last mentioned is to be seen in Lord Grosvenor's collection, in London, and is entitled, a "View on the River Dee." Of several of the former, the author has seen, he believes he may almost venture to assert, as many as four or five, if not even six different repetitions by Wilson.

CHAP. V.

WINE AND WALNUTS. — EXHIBITION OF WILSON'S PICTURES AT THE BRITISH INSTITUTION. — ARTICLE IN THE SUN NEWSPAPER. — VALUE OF FIGURES IN LANDSCAPE. — WILSON NOT ALWAYS NEGLIGENT IN THE MANAGEMENT OF HIS FOREGROUNDS. — ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIS PICTURES AND THOSE OF CLAUDE. — COMPARISON BETWEEN VIRGIL AND OVID. — INCE CASTLE. — LADY FORD'S COLLECTION OF WILSONS. — DR. WALCOTT. — PICTURE PAINTED BY WILSON FOR THE LATE KING. — BENEVOLENCE OF HIS LATE MAJESTY. — HIS PATRONAGE OF THE ARTS. — PORTRAIT OF WILSON.

IN an interesting and highly entertaining publication, entitled “Wine and Walnuts, or After-Dinner Chit-Chat,” and which has appeared since the foregoing pages were written, may be found the following particulars relating to Wilson: —

“Richard Wilson, — alas! the greatest genius, the least understood!

“Wilson was a man of superior education, and of a good family. He was always addressed by Lord Camden as cousin Wilson, being related to that great judge by the mother's side.

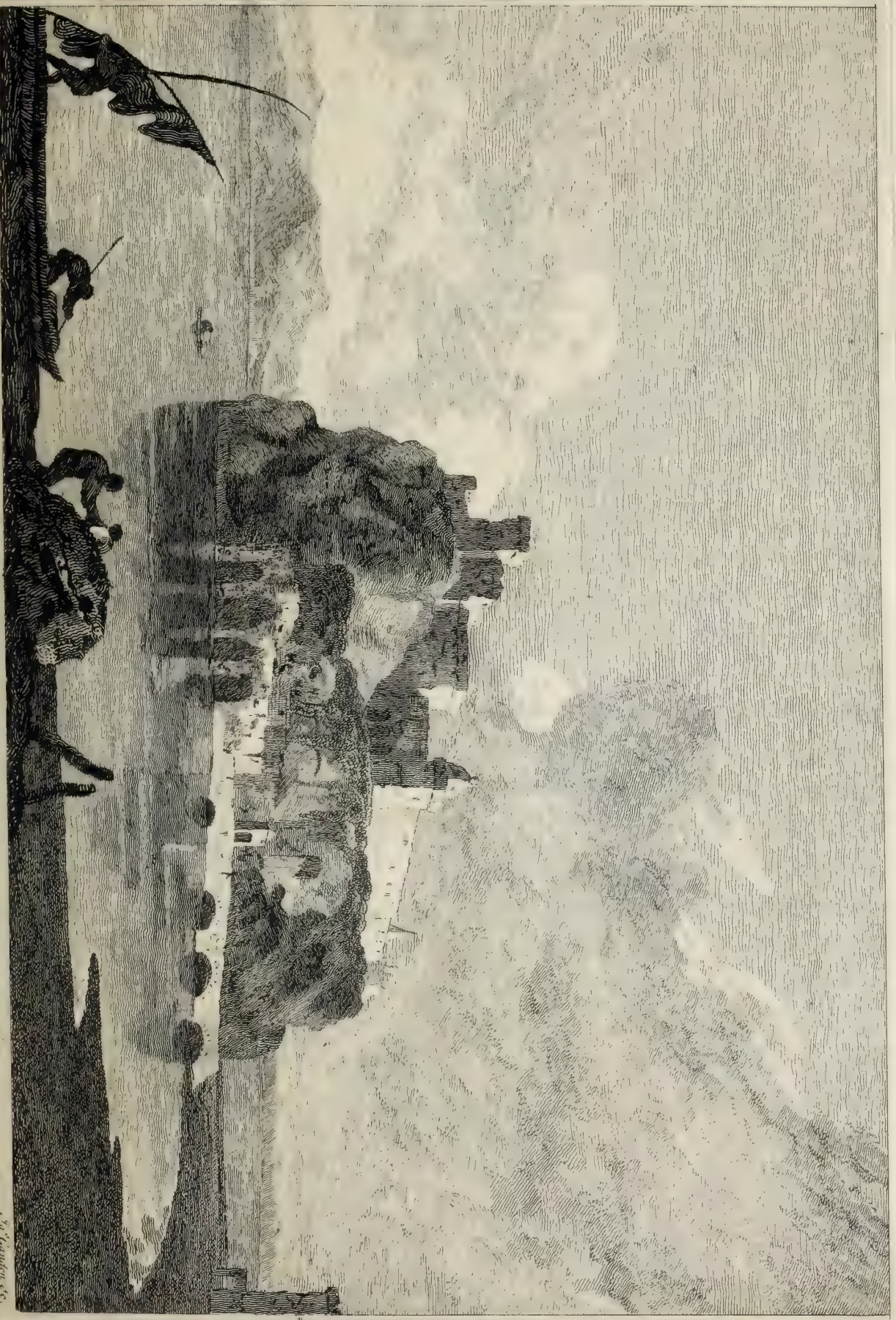
“Richard Wilson and Willy Thomson (an organist, who kept a music shop in Exeter 'Change) were great cronies. The cheerful music-seller *was not much hurried*, as Frank Hayman was wont to say of many ingenious wights in his day, whose talents were neglected, or who, in short, had little business. Hence his fireside was a solace to the misanthropic painter, than whom no mortal of his transcendent talent had ever greater cause to complain. Perhaps it is injustice to his memory to write him down misanthrope; certainly he became a cynic—and who but must lament the cause?

“Wilson was one of those rare geniuses who appear formed to develop the almost hidden excellence of every science: his manners were austere, and unbending to his superiors in rank; for he unfortunately lived when his lofty conceptions of art surpassed the com-

prehension of his compeers, which inducing indifference and neglect of his extraordinary talents, naturally begot an asperity in his proud mind. But he was urbane to every ingenious man, whether a professor of a liberal science or skilful mechanic ; and neglected talent could always draw largely upon his sympathies. Thomson was a man exactly suited to his taste : he was humorous, good-tempered, and *recherché* in his own profession ; and being, as is said before, *not much hurried*, Wilson, when under the influence of the spleen, would quit his easel, and march off to Exeter 'Change, where, under cover of Thomson's stall, he would sit and moralise on the evil dispensations of the Fates to men of mind.

" Sometimes, when a propitious star disposed a connoisseur to look in upon him and purchase one or two of his easel pictures, he would dress himself in his best suit, and proceed to old Pinche's, the Black Horse, near Somerset House barracks, and order some well-cooked dish, (Scotch collops was one of his favourites,) and return to the 'Change, where I have seen him warming the bright pewter plates on the top of Thomson's German stove, whilst the organist, to use his own phrase, '*composed the salad.*' ' Let me see,' said he, as the waiter delivered the materials, for Wilson liberally provided every necessary on these occasions, ' there is the thema,' placing the endive and celery on a plate ; ' there's for the majors,' pouring the vinegar into the bowl ; ' and there the minors,' as he opened the Florence flask ; then stirring the egg, he would hum an air, and talk of ' tone and semi-tone ; and holding the mustard, and looking at his patron, ' beg to know if he liked a bold diapason !' When mixing the contrariety of ingredients, he would conclude with a bow to Wilson, singing the old madrigal, ' Sweet Harmony !' Garrick happening to call on one of these occasions, observed, ' As I came along I saw Thomson tuning the painter into a moral concord.' These were high treats to the parties ; for there they sat, drinking cold punch and smoking, until the nine o'clock bell put an end to their conclave, and rung them out of 'Change.

Ch. Wilson del.



CASTLE of ISCHIA.

Ed. Gandon sc.

"I remember passing a Christmas-eve with Garrick, Wilson, and Arne, in this snug book-shop, with unusual pleasure. I was dining with my cousin in Beaufort Buildings, when I received a note from Thomson, 'praying that I would, if convenient, look in about eight, and I might find a friend,' enjoining me to let the call appear accidental. My friends kindly allowed me to depart. I recollect it was a deep snow; but I had but a few steps to go, when, on entering the wicket of the old Exchange, (for the great gate was closed on account of the cold, and only a small door left open at each end,) I was struck with the place, which looked uncommonly cheerful, as I cast my eye along the avenue of stalls, with the candles and lamps glistening on the bright red berries of the shining holly, with which each petty dealer in this mart of multifarious wares had liberally decked his allotment.

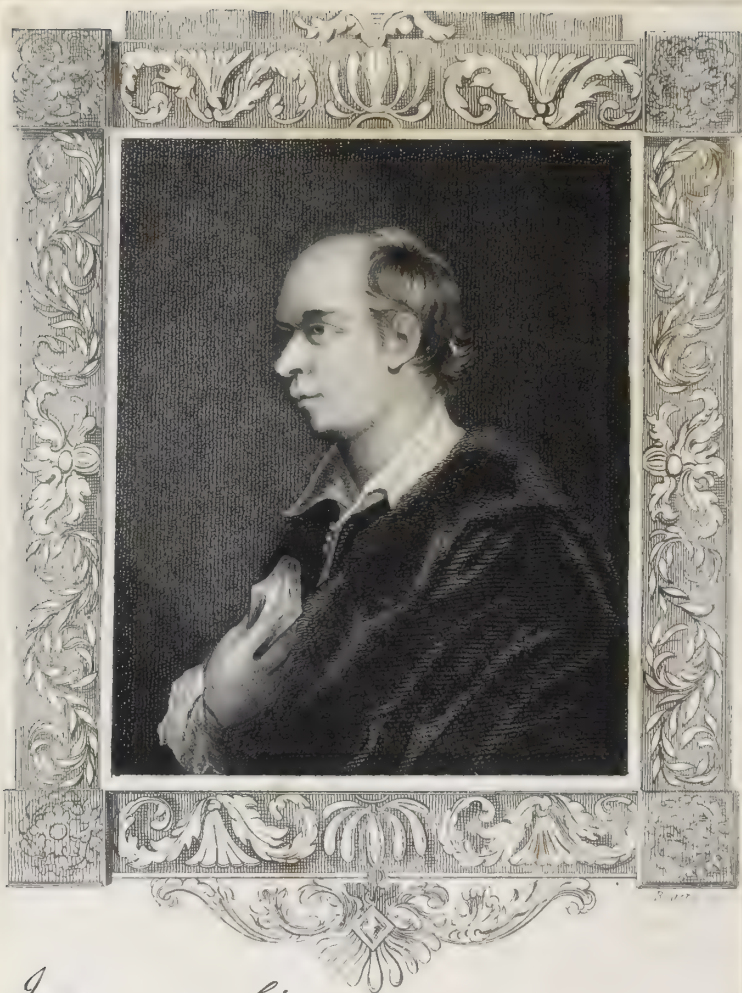
"Arrived in front of Thomson's, I stopped to turn over a copy of Williams's Psalmody, which was ready opened at the Christmas anthem—'Behold, I bring you glad tidings,' when a voice that I had never heard, from a visage that I had never seen (as I thought), peeping between the sprigs of *holly*, familiarly accosted me with 'The compliments of the season, Sir; how does your good old uncle?' and before I could recover from my surprise, added, 'Will you walk in, Mr. Hardcastle, and do as we do?' The strangeness of the voice, and the odd gesticulations of this unknown, attracted the momentary attention of the passengers, when Thomson thrust forward his good-natured face, and beckoned me in. He opened the hatch at the end of his stall, in the corner behind the eastern gate, and I entered; when I was agreeably surprised to find Garrick, Arne, and Wilson, crowded over a little table, with some of Garrick's choice wine before them, which he had sent in a basket for the occasion. I had often heard of this humour of Roscius's, but could scarcely have credited that the alteration of voice and visage could have been so complete, at the will of that extraordinary player."

Among other witticisms mentioned by this amusing writer, are the following, which, if they be not actually true, are at least highly

characteristic of the parties concerned. Dr. Johnson, Sterne, Wilson, and Goldsmith, are supposed to be assembled at Garrick's, with a party of ladies, for supper, and whom the gentlemen had kept waiting.

" ' We were very lively at your expense, indeed, Gentlemen,' said Mrs. Garrick. The two Misses * * * *, and some others, all young, beautiful, and unmarried, joined in the diversion. ' Shall I tell?' said she, addressing herself to her companion. ' Well, then, to punish you for not obeying our summons, the ladies likened you all to plants, and fruits, and flowers.' ' Pray let us hear,' said Wilson; ' doubtless I come in for a sprig of laurel.' ' No, Sir,' said the pretty lively lady, ' you are wrong.' ' For *rue*, perchance,' said he: ' No, Sir, guess again.' ' Why, I am dubbed bitter enough; perhaps a crab,' said he; ' for that man (pointing to Garrick) has dubbed me Sour Dick.' ' Guess again,' said the laughing maid. ' Ay, Sir,' said my old friend the Churchman, ' how bewitching is the tongue of woman, beautiful, witty, and chaste: '—such was she. All the moralising of our wondrous sage was at an end; we were charmed by her spell, and anxious for her explanation, as children tired out, guessing at a riddle. ' Will you give it up?' said Miss * * * *. ' Yea, madam.' ' Why, then, Sir, you are likened to olives. Now, Sir, will you dare to enquire farther?' ' Let me see,' said Wilson, all eyes upon him. — ' Well, then, my dear, out with it; I dare!' ' Then know, Sir,' said she, rising and curtseying most gravely, ' Mister Wilson is rough to the taste at first, tolerable by a little longer acquaintance, and delightful at last.' ' Art thou content, friend Richard?' said Johnson: ' that is very handsome, Sir.' Wilson never looked so becomingly before; he made the damsel his best bow. ' Faith,' said he, ' I shall henceforth have a better opinion of myself. I drink to you, my dear, and should be proud to give your hand to one deserving of your superior merits.'

" ' Come, young lady,' said Wilson, ' doubtless you have begged of Flora or Pomona some symbol for the poet.' ' O! I presume then



I am Sir
your most obedient Serv^t
Bliss. Goldsmith.

that the *shamrock* is to be my crown,' said Goldsmith. Then suddenly correcting himself—'I don't mean shamrock, that's neither fruit nor flower.—Ah,' smiting his own forehead, 'there is the poor Irishman's head again,' and laughed most good-humouredly at his own blunder. 'What thinkest thou of *noli me tangere*?' said Wilson, smiling; 'let us submit it to the ladies.' 'That is Latin, I presume,' said Miss ****; 'may I beg a translation, Sir?' addressing herself to Doctor Johnson. 'Why, my dear young lady,' said Johnson, pausing, 'that is a sentence from the Holy Scriptures, perhaps improperly applied to a plant;—the saying of Our Lord, to Mary Magdalene, in the garden.—I hope you read that sacred book.' 'I do, Sir,' said the maiden, blushing at the question; adding, with graceful modesty, 'and I humbly trust, Sir, with reverence for its precepts.' 'Bless you, dearest,' said the pious Doctor, taking her gently by the hand; 'bless you, my child; and may your fair symbol be the spotless lily, clothed in purity, to blossom in eternity!'

"I have forgotten the resemblances of many (said my old friend); but, if my memory serves me, Goldsmith pressed her for his, and the lively girl likened him to the passion-flower,

'Of all the painted garden, Flora's pride!
Wrapp'd in a frumpish hood at *even-tide*.'

The prompt allusion gained her great applause. She was a charming witty little puss (said my friend).—Sterne she likened to the sensitive plant, that shrunk into itself with more than earthly feeling. 'And now for Doctor Johnson's, Miss, if you will favour us,' said Goldsmith. 'May I take the liberty, Sir?' said she, looking at the wise man. 'Why not, dear?' said Johnson; 'certainly, by all means.' She seemed to stand in awe, as though it were profane to make the moralist the subject of her innocent playfulness. We were all attention. '*We* likened you, Sir, then, to an aloe;' and, with a faltering voice, added, 'as a lofty plant, whose glorious head raised towards heaven, adorns creation but once in a hundred years!' Johnson was silent for a while; then bowing to the ladies, gallantly said, 'Ah! shall we be forgiven for thus banishing the gentle sex from our lordly

presence? Ladies, we must henceforth learn to sacrifice at the altar of the Graces, and become men again, by emulating the nobler knights of old!"

In the year 1814, a very numerous collection of pictures, painted by Wilson, was offered for the inspection of the public in the British Gallery, in Pall-Mall; these, together with others by Hogarth, Gainsborough, and Zoffani, in addition to those by Sir Joshua Reynolds, which were exhibited in the same Gallery the preceding year, were intended to display the powers of the British School, of which, indeed, the country which gave birth to artists so distinguished, might very justly be proud. In the preface to the catalogue, on this occasion, among other remarks, was the following paragraph relating to Wilson, viz.

"Many of the works of Wilson will be contemplated with delight; few artists have excelled him in the tint of air, perhaps the most difficult of attainment for the landscape painter; every object in his pictures keeps its place, because each is seen through its proper medium. This excellence alone gives a charm to his pencil, and, with judicious application, may be turned to the advantage of the British artist. The merit of his works is now justly appreciated; and we may hope that, since the period of his decease, the love and knowledge of the art have been so much diffused through the country, that the exertion of such talents may never again remain unrewarded during the lifetime of him who possessed them! In such a hope we do most sincerely unite!" *

In the month of July, of the same year, the following article appeared in the Sun newspaper, which, as it seems to be written with a true feeling for the beauties and the various excellencies of the artist under consideration, pointing out, at the same time, with great judgment and discrimination, the various powers which he displayed, may justly be considered as well worthy of a place among these testimonies to his merit.

* Catalogue, British Institution, 1814.

“ In our last article,” it is observed, “ respecting this gallery (the British Institution), we noticed some of the peculiar excellencies of Hogarth ;— we now turn to the task of offering a few remarks on the pictures of Wilson contained in this exhibition, of which there are about seventy, including several of the most celebrated.

“ The style of this artist is, in a peculiar degree, chaste, classical, grand, and interesting ; and his genius of the most indubitable originality. It is impossible to contemplate his landscapes, and especially when the subject lies in Italy, without experiencing emotions of that sublime description, which it is the boast of superior talents to have the power of exciting. The graceful and easy undulation of line in his distances, which carry the delighted eye to the horizon, where it rests on tints truly celestial ; the awful grandeur of his scenery, partaking of the sublimity, without the wildness and horror of Salvator Rosa, and the appropriate character which universally pervades it ; the affecting and beautiful introduction of the ruined arch, or fallen column, and all the mouldering glories of architecture ; the nobleness of his conceptions, and the corresponding vigour of his execution, tend, together, to fill the breast of the spectator with wonder and admiration.

“ In many of these pictures Italy is realised, and, at one glance, we are enabled to enter into all the great and powerful feelings which are awakened by the recollection of what our earlier studies taught us respecting that land of heroes, that seat of stupendous empire, which virtue raised and luxury withdrew, till it presented those melancholy scenes, in the representation of which Wilson so pre-eminently excels.

“ They are fine compositions, mingling the loveliest appearances of nature, where nature is most beautiful, with dreary and dark desolation, and every touching image which decaying grandeur, in the noblest works of art, could suggest to a classical imagination.

“ From these sources an emotion is engendered by the magic power of the painter, to which we can apply no other epithet but that of ‘ Sacred.’ ”

In Wilson's picture of "The Tomb of the Horatii and Curiatii, near Albano,"* in the author's collection, all the various excellencies here enumerated, both of conception and execution, are displayed in a remarkable degree, with the additional advantage of having those affecting and "sacred" emotions, which the writer above quoted has so ably described, greatly heightened by the judicious introduction of a most masterly group of well-chosen figures, highly classical, and singularly appropriate to the grandeur and sublimity of the scene; affording a fine illustration of the very painter-like remark made by Mr. Alison, when pointing out the importance of *figures*, "in determining and heightening the characters of nature, and affording to the artist the means of producing both greater strength and greater *unity of expression* than is to be found either in the rude or in the embellished state of real society."

In the example here mentioned, any person with the least degree of feeling or discernment must, doubtless, be very forcibly struck with the skill and admirable intelligence which prompted the introduction of the upright and dignified senatorial figure, which forms the centre of the beautiful pyramidal group in this picture, and which is made so finely to *unite in expression* with the majestic ruin on the right; nor can he fail to observe, at the same time, how at once peaceful and appropriate is the addition of the piping shepherdess, as connected with the murmur of the distant waterfall, conveying to the mind of the spectator the most soothing ideas of tranquillity and repose, while the fancy wanders, and the imagination luxuriates, amid an assemblage of objects the most sublime and enchanting, the whole of which are mellowed and thrown into harmony by the glowing splendours of an evening sun! What a magnificent scene! how grand! how sublime! Justly, indeed, has this painter been styled the *poet of landscape*!

The value of figures in landscapes, and the interest excited in the mind of the spectator by them, when judiciously introduced, have

* The picture here mentioned is nearly five feet in length, and has inscribed upon it, in large characters, at one corner, "R. W. Roma. 1764."—*then belonging to*

not been unaptly set forth in the pleasing work of a late writer, whose observations on this subject, as they afford some useful hints towards our better comprehending the principles of that *unity of character* which we have been considering, and as such remarks may not be uninteresting to the reader of taste, will not be thought, perhaps, unacceptable.

“The landscape,” observes the author, “however dignified, however picturesque, is, unless animated by human figures, far from complete. The mind is soon satisfied with the view of rock, of wood, and water; but if the peasant, the shepherd, or the fisherman, be seen, or if, still more engaging, a group of figures be thrown into some important action, the heart as well as the imagination is affected, and a new sensation of exquisite delight, and scarcely admitting of satiety, fills and dilates the bosom.

“Those who, either with the pen or pencil, combine the energy of human action with the awful or romantic scenery of a rude, or with the softened features of a cultivated country, secure, and have a claim, to the most permanent fame. The banditti of Salvator Rosa, the sweetly interesting figures of Poussin, and the rustic simplicity of Gainsborough, unite with the surrounding views of nature in effecting an impression of the utmost power, and not otherwise procurable through the medium of a combination of this kind.”*

“With such a mastery over our passions,” continues the writer in the newspaper above quoted, “we are yet not blinded to some defects in this artist,” meaning Wilson.

“Many of his landscapes of English views are not congenial to the soil and climate of England. They partake too much of southern skies, and lose the character which ought to belong to them, to acquire that of another quarter of the globe. There is frequently too much evidence of carelessness in the finish of even those subjects which are the highest in point of conception; and, generally speaking, we may observe that the foregrounds are too much neglected.

* Drake's Literary Hours.

“Yet, with these petty blemishes, Wilson must still take his place among the foremost artists who have adorned the last century. Few landscape painters, ancient or modern, can produce so potent an effect upon the mind, and he will be handed down to posterity, not only as an honor to Britain, but as a distinguished ornament to the universal school of art !”*

Now although the author perfectly coincides in opinion, in almost all that has been said in the above article, concerning our artist, he cannot agree in the remark respecting his foregrounds, whereby we are led to believe that, in the management of this part of his pictures, Wilson has, generally speaking, been guilty of negligence.

In reply to this observation, he will venture to make it appear that such is by no means the case, and that whenever the supposed “evidence of carelessness in the finish” is observable in Wilson’s more classic productions, or, to use the writer’s own words, in “those subjects which are the highest in point of conception,” the absence of high finish has arisen from any thing rather than from neglect.

The object with Wilson, let it be constantly remembered, was “to improve mankind by the grandeur of his ideas, instead of endeavouring to amuse them by the minute neatness of his imitations; to conceal, rather than to display, the subordinate marks of his assiduity.”†

As the means of accomplishing this, his chief care was so to arrange the parts of his picture, as to draw the observation of the spectator principally to the main feature of his composition, “in which,” as Mr. Alison expresses it, “only the greater expressions of nature are retained,” and there to arrest his attention, without suffering the eye, and consequently the mind, to be seduced by extraneous ornament; or of allowing the imagination to be disturbed by the glittering finish of weeds, &c. in the foreground. “It is not the eye,” (such sentiments cannot be too often repeated,) “it is the

* Sun Newspaper, July, 1814,

† Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

mind," says Sir Joshua, " which the painter of genius desires to address ; nor will he waste a moment upon those objects which only serve to catch the sense, to divide the attention, and to counteract his great design of speaking to the heart. The skill, therefore, of the landscape painter, as a man of genius, will be displayed in expressing that which employs his pencil, whatever it may be, as a *whole* ; so that the general effect and power of the whole may take possession of the mind, and for a while suspend the consideration of the subordinate parts ; he will, in fine, apply himself to the imagination, not to curiosity." *

Bearing in mind this principle, we need only to observe with what care, and it may very justly be said, exquisite penciling, certain parts of Wilson's pictures, even of his larger ones, are very frequently made out, and consider how much labour and attention have evidently been bestowed upon them ; (I have been, indeed, told by those who witnessed his process, that he would often paint, over and over again, a mossy stone or other object, half a dozen times, before he could get it to his mind ;) if we attentively examine those particular parts that really are highly finished, and which the painter intended as chiefly instrumental in producing the effect which he aimed at, upon the mind of the spectator ; we must be led to conclude, that it was any thing rather than negligence, that induced him to leave such other parts as he considered to be of inferior importance in the composition in a less finished state. Wilson was well aware, that " the detail of particulars which does not assist the expression of the main characteristic, is worse than useless, it is mischievous, as it distracts the attention, and draws it from the principal point ; for it may be remarked," continues the accurate observer quoted, " that the impression which is left on our minds, even of things which are familiar to us, is seldom more than general effect, beyond which we do not look in recognising such objects. To express this in painting, is to express what is congenial and natural to the mind of man,

* Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

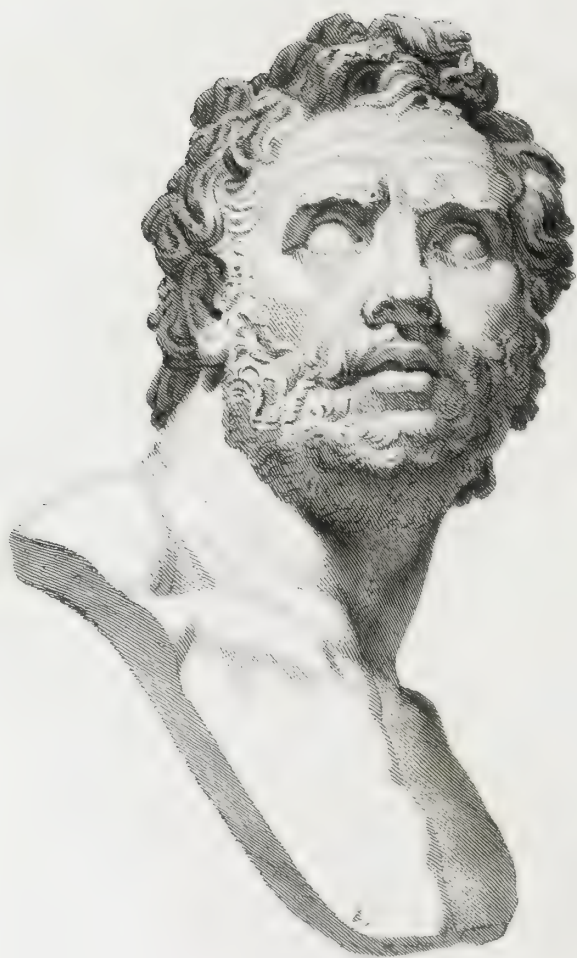
and gives him by reflection his own mode of conceiving.”* If, therefore, we take fairly into consideration all the circumstances above mentioned, we shall have no difficulty in feeling convinced, in the very clearest manner, that carelessness, at least in his more sublime and classic productions, is one of the very last faults attributable to our artist; and that, moreover, on those parts, which-soever they might be, whether in the foreground or elsewhere, wherein he judged peculiar care and nicety of penciling to be productive of advantage, no master ever bestowed greater attention, or was more free from the fault which has been attributed to him; on the contrary, it will be sufficiently evident, that so far was it from negligence, that it was by *design*, and upon studied *principle* only, that Wilson not unfrequently chose to leave the foreground slightly made out; a principle, which, according to the author’s way of thinking, has, generally speaking, the power of exciting in the mind of the spectator, “emotions of taste,” more sublime, more exquisite, and more undisturbed, than the contrary practice observable in the pictures of Claude; in which, inimitable as they are, and beautiful in the very highest degree, we may sometimes observe, it cannot be denied, an over attention to what may be denominated the detail.

Without any intention whatever of detracting from the merit of the master last named, than whose productions none assuredly can be more delightful, there does certainly appear to be a considerable difference in the respective excellence of these artists, inasmuch as the particulars under consideration are concerned; that is, the greater or less finishing of the foreground, no less than in the judgment displayed by them respectively, in their introduction of the detail. The advantage in each of these particulars, must, unquestionably, be conceded to our countryman Wilson.

The force of this comparison between the works of Claude and Wilson, respecting the points above mentioned, may, possibly, be not

* Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds.





unaptly explained by a criticism upon a subject somewhat of a parallel nature, in which the writer exemplifies a similar difference as observable in the styles of Virgil and Ovid; that is, in so far as relates to the descriptive scenery with which the works of these admirably discriminating and painter-like poets so richly abound.

If, in our perusal of the following quotation, we substitute the names of Claude for Ovid, and Wilson for Virgil, we shall not, perhaps, be very wide of the mark in our aim at an illustration of the peculiar difference alluded to.

“Ovid,” observes the author referred to, “has ever exhausted his subject by minutiae, which diminish the effect of the picture, and annihilate the pleasure of the reader, by leaving nothing for his fancy to conceive or complete. The following description of evening, by the more judicious Virgil, though including but two objects, immediately suggests to the reader a number of adjunctive and picturesque circumstances : —

‘Et jam summa procul villarum culmina fumant,
Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ.’*

“The village smoke, at evening, brings forward the idea of the weary peasant returning to a cheerful fire and hearty meal, meeting the affectionate embrace of his wife and children; while the lengthening shades, from lofty hills, suggest a picture of the setting sun, and of the soft and pensive scenery characteristic of the close of a fine day. Had Ovid sat down to draw a similar landscape, he would, probably, have occupied fifty lines in delineating every particular his fervid imagination could body forth, and when the elaborate picture was complete, the two lines of Virgil would be preferred by every man of taste.”†

With an imagination as fruitful and sublime as it ever fell to the lot of either poet or painter to possess, regulated, on all occa-

* “And see! from village tops the smoke ascend,
And falling shades from western hills extend.”

WARTON.

† Drake’s Literary Hours.

sions, by a taste peculiarly chaste and refined, it was that Wilson followed, in the most felicitous manner, the very practice thus highly commended in the Mantuan bard, and upon principles precisely the same. To talk, therefore, of negligence, when his labours were directed by science alone, is totally to misunderstand his meaning, and the object which he principally had in view.

Besides other pictures of smaller dimensions by Wilson, the author possesses no less than four of his large landscapes, that is to say, each of them nearly five feet long, and proportionably wide, in no one of which, he will venture to say, can the charge of negligence in the execution of any part whatever be justly attributed to the painter; the very foreground, even in each and every one of them, (consisting of beautiful representations of the most tasteful bas-reliefs, Corinthian or Ionic capitals, trunks of trees, stones, weeds, &c.) is penciled and worked up with the very greatest imaginable attention, and in looking at which it would be perfectly absurd to talk of indifference or neglect. The objects introduced into his foregrounds, it is true, are comparatively few, but then they are distinct, without any thing elaborate or overcharged; and where Claude very possibly would have had a profuse and flowery parterre, Wilson has selected one or two elegantly formed weeds, of which he is satisfied to catch the distinguishing features only; and which, being painted with the characteristic touch of a masterly hand, and in such a manner as to exhibit them at once as marked and particular objects, are rendered equally, if not more a very great deal, capable of imprinting on the mind a distinct and complete image. Just so, we find that a few well chosen words, such, for instance, as are to be found in either the *Allegro* or *Il Penseroso* of Milton, bring home to the heart, by a single stroke, all the more minute and interesting beauties of the scenery which it was the intention of the poet to describe; and which, by their being portrayed with conciseness and simplicity, we feel and acknowledge to have been at once most truly and most forcibly conveyed. "The strength and vivacity of

description, whether in prose or poetry, depend much more upon the happy choice of one or two striking circumstances, than upon the multiplication of them.”* The same principle is equally applicable to the art under consideration, and more obvious instances of its truth will not easily be found, than those in the well understood compositions of our countryman.

This method of proceeding is, indeed, in a more particular manner, adapted to the style of Wilson’s compositions, as contrasted with those of Claude, and which are, for the most part, especially his Italian scenery, of a grand and solemn character. “It is observed, in general,” says a learned writer upon a sister art, “that in describing solemn or great objects, the concise manner is almost always proper; descriptions of gay and smiling scenes can bear to be more amplified and prolonged, as strength is not the predominant quality expected in these.”

“The circumstances in description,” observes the same author, when speaking of poetry, “should be expressed with conciseness and with simplicity; for, when either too much exaggerated, or too long dwelt upon and extended, they never fail to enfeeble the impression that is designed to be made. Brevity almost always contributes to vivacity. We have reason always to distrust an author’s descriptive talents, when we find him laborious and turgid, amassing commonplace epithets and general expressions to work up a higher conception of some object, of which, after all, we can form but an indistinct idea. The best describers are simple and concise. They set before us such features of an object, as, on the first view, strike and warm the fancy; they give us ideas which a statuary or a painter could lay hold of, and work after them; which is one of the strongest and most decisive trials of the real merit of description.”†

A dozen pages of the most minute and laboured description, employed in delineating his character, would totally fail of its effect,

* Blair’s Lectures.

† Ibid.

when compared to "the characteristic features of the portrait, sketched for himself, by the exquisite pencil of Gray." *

" Him have we seen, the greenwood side along,
As o'er the heath we hied, our labour done,
Oft as the wood-lark piped his evening song,
With wishful eye pursue the setting sun."

In setting forth the beauties of a passage in the *Penseroso*, in as far as relates to the particular under consideration, the writer just quoted remarks, "We may observe the conciseness of the poet's manner. He does not rest long on one circumstance, or employ a great many words to describe it, which always make the impression faint and languid; but placing it in one strong point of view, full and clear before the reader, he there leaves it." †

All this speaks volumes to the mind of him who, unbiassed by prejudice, and with a heart capable of being touched and expanded by the awakening impressions which the magic productions of poetical genius are ever calculated to inspire, can calmly and quietly sit down to the contemplation of those strong and expressive images, all of one class, and simple in their style, which are to be found in a grand and classical picture of our inimitable Wilson.

Sufficient, it is to be hoped, has been said to make it appear, according to the promise which was ventured to be given, that, instead of our imputing negligence or indifference to this great painter, we are bound to concede to him the rare merit of having laboured with judgment, with science, with attention, and taste.

Although from a full conviction of his having been undeserving of it, the writer has been desirous of vindicating our artist from the charge of negligence, especially in his more important and classic productions, he is not so bigotted to his merits as to be insensible to the defects frequently apparent in many of Wilson's pictures. Such imperfections, however, will, generally speaking, be found to be-

* Philosophical Essays, by Dugald Stewart.

† Blair's Lectures.

R. Wilson del.



BANKS of the T Y N E.

J. G. G. G. G.

long to those which he executed at a later period of his life, and more particularly in his views of English scenery, when depression and poverty rendered him equally careless of his fame, and indifferent to the opinion of the public. His earlier pictures, and, in a more especial manner, those painted in Italy, are certainly not obnoxious to such reprehension.

There are, it is to be imagined, few counties in the kingdom that do not possess some specimen of Wilson ; we must, however, in vain hope to see again collected into one place so many fine examples of this artist as were exhibited at the British Gallery in the year 1814.

Abounding, as that collection certainly did, with productions of the most exquisite kind, there were still some pictures of very inferior quality to be found therein ; and not a few among them which might fairly be considered as unworthy of the name of *originals*. Perhaps no master has been so often copied as Wilson ; and to an eye not thoroughly experienced in the art, there is great difficulty in ascertaining the genuineness of his hand. Barrett, Hodges, and others, imitated his manner, in many instances, with very considerable success.

If the author mistakes not, the finest examples of Wilson are to be seen at Ince Castle, near Liverpool, the seat of — Blundell, Esq., and which may be justly, and he believes have been considered as the *chef-d'œuvres* of this artist. These pictures are four in number, of large dimensions, and are inserted in panels affixed to the walls ; one of them, a most beautiful performance, is a repetition of the “ Phaëton,” a subject well known throughout the world by the admirable engraving taken from it by Woollet, and which, for richness of colour, it being a glowing sunset, and for grandeur of light and shade, and composition, altogether stands unrivalled as a work of art. The late Mr. Walsh Porter had a fine picture of this same subject, though not in an equal state of preservation with that at Ince Castle. The above-mentioned pictures were executed expressly for the late Mr. Blundell, a gentleman of great taste, and an

enthusiastic admirer of the fine arts, who, in order that they might remain in the place for which they were originally painted, bequeathed them as heir-looms in his family.

It is, perhaps, to be lamented that productions so inestimable should be condemned to be thus permanently fixed ; for not to mention the extreme difficulty of their being saved in case of fire, while attached, as the writer saw them some years ago, so injudiciously to the walls, they were suffering considerably from the dampness of their situation, and one of them in particular, a view of the Campagna of Rome, was most materially injured.

Ince Castle is about ten miles west of Liverpool ; unfortunately not in the direct route to any other place of note, so that the amateur is under the necessity of making a journey over a rough and disagreeable road, expressly for that one object, if he wishes to have a sight of these pictures ; that one object, however, he may venture to be assured, will afford ample recompense for his trouble ; and though he lament, as very possibly he may, the difficulty, if he happens to live at a distance, of repeating his visit, no cause will be found for regret on account of either the loss of time, the fatigue, or the expense which the expedition may have occasioned ; such is the feast which these charming productions cannot fail to afford, independently of many other attractions.

For besides these treasures, the master-pieces of our great artist, Ince Castle contains a vast collection of other pictures, antique statues, bas-reliefs, and marbles, and may justly be considered quite a museum of art. Indeed no place that I have seen, out of the country itself, has so thoroughly the appearance of an Italian villa, or calls forth so many pleasing recollections and associations, connected with that classic ground, as does this elegant and highly ornamented retreat. How much reason is there to regret that so interesting a spot, — a spot where you may contemplate in perfection the Pantheon of Rome ! — where you tread on the very marble of Italy itself ! — and where you stand, surrounded on all sides with the finest productions of art, tastefully and classically arranged ! — how unfor-





tunately it happens, I repeat, that this very interesting place, instead of being, as it were, in an obscure corner of the kingdom, is not situate nearer the metropolis, or at least in a locality more conveniently accessible!

Perhaps the most numerous collection of paintings by Wilson, in the possession of an individual, is belonging to Lady Ford, in Gloucester Place, London. These pictures, amounting to thirty or forty, if not even to a still greater number, devolved to this Lady upon the decease of her brother, Mr. Boothe, for whose father, Mr. Boothe of the Adelphi, they were originally painted.

Lady Ford has also a book containing original sketches and drawings by Wilson, a most interesting collection. The greatest part, if not the whole, of these pictures, the writer remembers to have seen formerly in the Adelphi, soon after the decease of the elder Mr. Boothe; at that time they were without frames, covered with dust, and piled together in a heap, against the wall of a miserable garret, in which neglected situation they had remained, as he was informed, for a great number of years, unseen by any one; another proof of the little estimation in which the productions of our artist were generally held when the collection was made.

Fortunately for the public and for the memory of Wilson, these inestimable paintings are now in better hands; and it affords the author much pleasure in being able to bear testimony to the liberality of Lady Ford, who, with the greatest politeness, allows the inspection of these pictures to her friends; and who, no less in order to gratify the public, and at the same time with the view of promoting the cultivation of art, most handsomely complied with the desire of the British Institution, in their wish of adorning the walls of their gallery with some of these choice specimens of art.

Dr. Walcott, better known by the title of Peter Pindar, the friend and constant admirer of Wilson, possessed several small pictures in his best style, and which he had from the artist himself. Among them was the view from Kew Gardens, painted expressly for the late King, in which was introduced the pagoda, but which, al-

though exquisite in colour and simplicity of design, was, by some mismanagement, returned upon the hands of the painter. This most unfortunate proceeding caused, as may well be supposed, infinite mortification to Wilson ; and it was in consequence of that want of discernment, arising, it is too justly to be feared, from the absence of true taste in the advisers of his Majesty, that the satirist has so keenly vented his spleen, both in his rhymes and in the article before alluded to, viz. in the account of Wilson, inserted in the Supplement to the new Edition of Pilkington's Dictionary of Painters.

The well known benevolence of his late Majesty's disposition, and the kindness which he evinced on all occasions to those about him, must for ever exculpate him from any intentional act of cruelty ; and it is to be lamented that in this instance the King did not follow the genuine dictates of his heart, ever alive to the fostering of genius, and to the encouragement of the arts. For how long a period the lines of the satirist may stand, the author does not pretend to predict, but the eminent virtues of our late good King (" so excellent a King !") are too deeply engraven upon the hearts of his affectionate subjects to be erased, or even obscured by reflections such as these ; and the monument which his late Majesty has erected to his fame, in the establishment of the Royal Academy, alone, an institution heretofore unknown in Great Britain, must stand on record to the latest posterity, as a convincing proof how much and how sincerely he was the patron of art.

" Soon after his Majesty had ascended the throne," observed the late President of the Royal Academy, in his discourse delivered to its members assembled therein, Dec. 10th, 1811, " his benign regard for the prosperity of the fine arts in these realms was manifested by his gracious commands to establish this favoured institution.

" The heart of every artist and of the friend of art glowed with mutual congratulation, to see a British King, for the first time, at the head of the fine arts. His Majesty nominated forty members guardians to his infant academy ; and that they have been faithful to the trust which he graciously reposed in them, the several apart-

ments under this roof sufficiently testify. The professors are highly endowed with accomplishments and scientific knowledge in the several branches to which they are respectively appointed; and the funds able to render relief to the indigent and decayed artists, their widows and children.

“Who can reflect for a moment,” continued Mr. West, “on the rare advantages here held out for the instruction of youthful genius, and the aid given to the decayed, their widows and helpless offspring, without feeling the grateful emotions of the heart rise towards a patriot King, for giving to the arts this home within the walls of a stately mansion, and towards the members of this academy, who, as his faithful guardians, have so ably fulfilled the purposes for which the institution was formed.” *

In a small publication which has appeared since the foregoing pages were written, and from which extracts have already been made, may be seen the following remarks respecting his late Majesty, and which are given as if spoken by Dr. Monsey, a character “well known to the wits of the day, being himself one of the first class, and who from his eccentricities and playful humour, was frequently compared to Swift.”

“‘Ay,’ added the Doctor, ‘could the King have had his own way, what a country of intellect would this have been ere now. I question whether Charles himself possessed a spirit of greater munificence towards the arts and sciences in general than he. I have pondered a thousand times upon the question, why the rulers and governors of an intelligent people are so commonly indifferent to the merits of the *truly great* — the few of rare genius — whose virtues and whose talents make others wise? Kings would cherish such, I verily believe, if ministers would let them. Our good old sovereign did all he could, and delighted to enumerate how many of his subjects of transcendent abilities would be added to the list of British worthies,

* Galt’s Life and Works of West.

and henceforth make a figure in the annals of his reign. Heaven preserve his memory !' said my enlightened friend, ' should be the word with men of science, for he fought their battles single-handed.' "

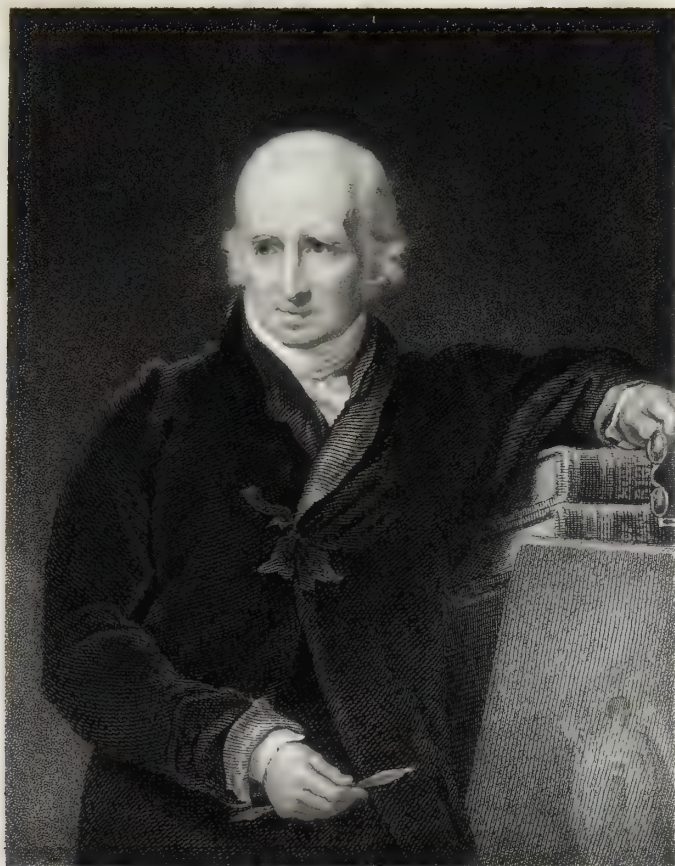
To the above is added in a note, " It no doubt annoyed his Majesty, pious as he was, without the least tincture of bigotry, to be thwarted in his zeal for the promotion of the fine arts by those starched divines, who held that the adorning the metropolitan church with pictures, designed from passages in the Holy Scriptures, was incompatible with the sanctity of a Christian temple. Yet, *credite posteri*, this same metropolitan church had, in the reign of Queen Anne, proudly displayed the trophies of Blenheim and Ramillies, and now exhibits for money a daily exhibition of sculptured images of English heroes, attended by heathen deities !

" It should not be forgotten," continues this interesting writer, " that Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Benjamin West, and others, good men and great artists, proposed, *gratuitously*, to paint sacred historical subjects to fill the panels of the piers of the arches that support the dome of this magnificent edifice. And that although his Majesty approved of the plan, Dr. Terrick, the bishop of London, would not give his consent." *

Two of the above-mentioned pictures, belonging to Dr. Walcott, were purchased of him by Sir William Pilkington, bart., and are now in his collection at Chivet, in Yorkshire; they are small but very beautiful specimens of the artist. The author was present when the transaction took place, and did his utmost to induce the old gentleman to part with the pagoda, but in vain, he having set an additional value upon it, as there was reason to believe, from the very circumstance related.

Besides various pictures by Wilson, several of which were exhibited at the British Gallery in 1814, Sir Watkin Williams Wynne,

* Vide " Wine and Walnuts."



BENJAMIN WEST, P.R.A

Benj. West

LONDON





Robert Wilson

bart. has in his possession a portrait of the artist himself, painted by Raphael Mengs. From a copy of this picture, painted by Mr. John Taylor, under the inspection of Wilson, a very beautiful engraving was made some years ago by Mr. Bond, for a work entitled "The Fine Arts of the English School," accompanied with a short memoir, the main particulars of which have been noticed in the foregoing pages. The frontispiece to the present volume is from the graver of the same accomplished artist. *

For further particulars respecting pictures painted by Wilson, vide Appendix, C; in which also will be seen a list of the chief of those which have been engraved, D.

Such are the particulars the author has been able to collect, respecting the life and the works of our great landscape painter. To say that Wilson's productions are without fault, would be praise no less injudicious than untrue; but since his merits so infinitely outweigh his deficiencies, and as no one ever surpassed him in the true and legitimate excellencies of that branch of the art which he pursued, how much reason, alas! is there to fear it may be long before we "look upon his like again!"

In making this observation, let it not be imagined that there is the most distant intention of underrating the admirable productions of our landscape painters of the present day; on the contrary, no one contemplates with greater delight than the author the powers of that fertile mind and inexhaustible invention exhibited in the master-pieces of Turner, no less than the chaste and captivating beauties of Calcott; from the excellent works of both these artists

* Another portrait, purporting to have been painted also by Mengs, was exhibited at the British Institution, in 1814, belonging to Miss Boothe.

he has derived the highest degree of pleasure, and feels himself happy in possessing examples of their skill ; for with the great Sir Joshua, our country's pride, he is able to assert, that " the possessing the choicest examples of art, he considered as the best kind of wealth." *

* Malone's Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

PICTURES CONSIDERED IN A PECUNIARY POINT OF VIEW. — THOSE OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS FAST DIMINISHING IN NUMBER. — SUPERIORITY OF BRITISH ARTISTS. — WINKELMANN. — MONTESQUIEU. — DESTRUCTION OF SIR JOSHUA'S PICTURES BY FIRE AT BELVOIR CASTLE. — THE NATIVITY. — PAINTED WINDOW AT NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD. DIFFICULTY OF COPYING THE PICTURES OF SIR JOSHUA AND WILSON. — OPINIONS OF WEST AND OPIE RESPECTING COLOURING. — FAILURE OF THAT OF SIR JOSHUA. — BRITISH INSTITUTION. — SIR THOMAS BARNARD. — DEFENCE OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. — HIS METHOD OF COLOURING, AND APOLOGY. — LAUDABLE INSTANCE OF LIBERALITY IN SUPPORT OF THE ARTS.

ALTHOUGH in using the expression which forms the concluding sentence in the foregoing part of this work, Sir Joshua, doubtless, alluded to that intellectual wealth only, which fine pictures must ever be held to constitute; and in which light, unquestionably, they are chiefly to be contemplated by the real lover of art; still, it must be granted, there are other considerations of no trifling importance belonging to such possessions; that is, when considered in the light of *property* only; as it is very certain, that a fine picture now-a-days may be looked upon in almost the same light as a Bank of England note, being nearly as negociable, and possessing every property belonging to intrinsic wealth. Such treasures, indeed, have been at all times, and never perhaps were they more than at present, objects of research, and rarely to be obtained except by some lucky chance.

The avidity with which choice commodities of the kind are uniformly bought up, and the very high prices which have, especially of late years, been given for them at our public sales, bear ample testimony that this is actually the case ; such pictures having, in many instances, produced nearly three or four times the sum that had been originally paid for them. Among these, I am happy to say, may be numbered the productions of our Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose admirable works, though they are beyond all price, it is highly gratifying to observe, continually rise in estimation. And well indeed they may, for the time it is to be feared is far distant before we shall have it in our power to boast of another artist gifted like him with powers so multiform and extraordinary, however deserving of praise our painters are of the present day. In addition to this consideration must be added likewise another sad source of regret, when we reflect, that of the works which he left behind, how many, alas ! are no longer in existence ; and with what rapidity, owing to one disastrous cause or other, does the number of those which are still remaining continually diminish.

The observation applies almost as forcibly to the sublime productions of our great landscape painter also, although his works are not, fortunately for the lovers of art, of quite so perishable a nature in themselves as some of Sir Joshua's ; notwithstanding which, too many even of his are, from bad cleaning and other causes, no longer deserving of the name of Wilsons.

These are serious considerations, and well calculated to excite in our minds the most ardent desire of cherishing and enjoying to the utmost, as long as we are able, such interesting and valuable companions ; for, to use the emphatic words of an author who wrote upwards of a hundred years ago, “ no more can be had than what are now in being ; no new ones can be made ; the number of these must necessarily diminish by time and accidents, but cannot be supplied ; the world must be content with what it has ; for though there are ingenious men endeavouring to tread in the steps of such prodigies of art, whose works we are speaking of, there is yet no appear-



Engraved by J. Smith

THE END OF THE WORLD

ance that any will equal them, though I am in hopes that our own country does and will produce those that will come as near them as any other nation ; I mean as to history-painting, for that we already excel all others in portraits, is indisputable.” *

It is with sentiments of singular exultation that the author feels himself justified in asserting, without fear of contradiction, that, although so very long a period has elapsed since the above congratulatory declaration was made respecting the artists of our own country, the remark not only is now most strictly applicable, but that it has been equally so likewise during the whole course of the great number of years that have intervened.

For let us but only reflect what a proud succession of splendid talents has been witnessed, as belonging to the English school, since the foregoing observation was penned ; what a triumphant proof do the names of Reynolds, of Wilson, of Gainsborough, of Hogarth, and of so many other illustrious characters afford, of the futility and hollowness of that idle cant, which in former times our neighbours so liberally used, in stigmatising as barbarous and incapable, forsooth, the luminous inhabitants of a region destined to become to the nations around, the very Pole-star of literature, of science, and the arts !

“ Coxcombs, exulting, dared her powers despise,
Aspersed her sons, and slander'd e'en her skies :
But now, no more th' inglorious taunt is thrown ;
Her arts triumphant as her arms are known ;
Aroused, her genius soars on wings sublime,
Asserts her taste, and vindicates her clime.”

SHEE.

Who, in this our day, could suppose it to have been even possible, that such sentiments should ever have been entertained respecting a nation so enlightened as ours, capable of enumerating in its train, such a multitude of illustrious and unrivalled poets, painters, sculptors, and the most distinguished literary characters,

* Richardson's Essay on the Theory of Painting, 1715.

in every department of learning and science, — the very land, in fact, at once, of imagination, of ability, and taste; and by writers too, who bore a high reputation for learning and philosophy, in their day!

“ Abbé du Bos, President Montesquieu, and Abbé Winkelmann have followed one another,” says Mr. Barry, “ in assigning limits to the genius of the English; they pretend to point out a certain character of heaviness and want of fancy, which they deduce from physical causes. They say, that we can have no imagination, taste, or sensibility; that we succeed in nothing that requires genius; that our climate is so distempered, that we disrelish every thing; that it is in consequence of a north-east wind that our poets cannot arrive at the particular kind of delicacy that springs from taste; and that our natural capacity for the fine arts, amounts to very little, to nothing at all.”

It was scarcely in the power of any one, perhaps, to have exposed, in a more able manner, the absurd reveries of these foreigners, than the writer of the above paragraph has done, in his spirited defence of English genius. “ He has, indeed,” a writer has remarked, “ combated those philosophical speculators on climate with twofold powers; he has employed his pen and his pencil with equal ability, and not only foiled them in argument, but confounded them by fact, as the great room in the Adelphi sufficiently shows.”

Many, alas! and various, are the means which are perpetually at work, in stealing from us the treasures which it is still our good fortune to possess, in the productions by Sir Joshua’s inimitable hand! The very perishable, and in some instances evanescent materials of which many of his finest pictures are composed; arising, principally, from that unavoidable uncertainty respecting the nature and properties of the different colours, and in which he remained during the greater part of his career; his course having been, as it may indeed almost be said, little else than a series of experiments, carried on with the anxious and very laudable desire of discovering for the benefit of others, as well as for himself, those materials and ingredients





which might be most excellent among the various pigments and vehicles essential to his art ; added to which, the accidents by fire, and other unforeseen causes of destruction or decay ; all these circumstances combined, have tended most seriously to diminish the number of his inestimable works, and consequently very greatly to enhance the value of those which remain.

It is impossible to indulge in such reflections, without calling to mind the grievous loss sustained only a few years ago in the annihilation of that *chef-d'œuvre*, that magnificent assemblage of every thing which might be considered as fine, or that the most dazzling splendours of colouring could produce, "The Nativity," which, together with many other of Sir Joshua's most valuable productions, fell a sacrifice to the devouring flames that nearly levelled the stately mansion of Belvoir Castle with the ground.* A greater misfortune than this it was scarcely possible for the art to sustain ; a loss, indeed, which the author can never cease to lament, having been so fortunate as to enjoy frequent opportunities of contemplating and becoming familiar with the wonders of that sublime and inestimable master-piece of art, and before which, while wrapped in emotions of admiration and delight, he has been seated for hours together. Although the centre compartment of that deservedly admired work, the painted window in New College, Oxford, may afford some small degree of compensation for a loss so severe ; presenting, as it unquestionably does, a delightful representation of this very grand composition, still we look in vain for that rich, full, and Titianesque mellowness of colouring which, in so eminent a degree, the original painting displayed, and which, like that to be found in other works of this master, and his great contemporary, Wilson, though very rarely, indeed, to be seen in those of any other, has seldom, if ever, been fully attained in any copy, however excellent in every other respect ; so singularly difficult a matter, and almost so hopeless of attainment, does it seem to be, to arrive at the perfec-

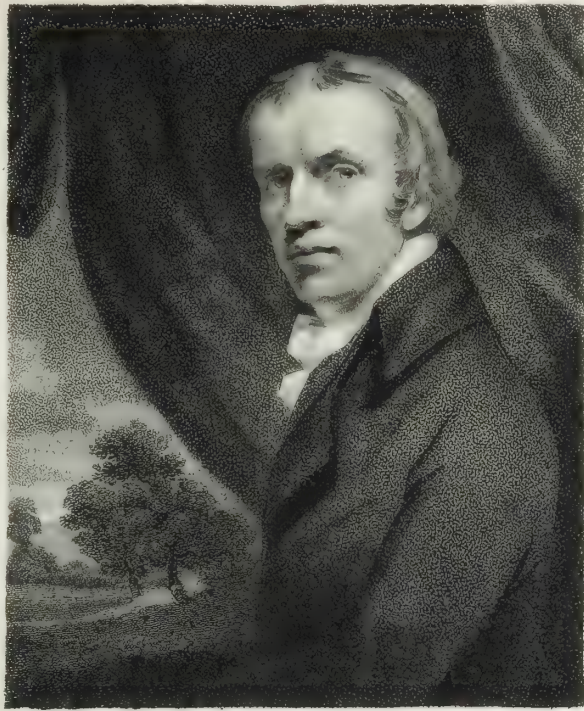
* The fire occurred in the night of the 26th of October, 1816. Vide Appendix B.

tion of that fresh, vigorous, brilliant, harmonious, and almost undefinable richness of hue, far easier to imagine than to describe, the exquisite beauty of which can be distinguished by the favoured few alone, who are gifted with that rare endowment, "an eye for colour," as others are said to be with an ear for musical sounds.

And here the author would not be thought to have used the expression "an eye for colour," in an incidental manner only, or at random; it being his opinion and belief, that there is a peculiar faculty of the mind belonging to the seeing of colours, analogous and answering to that which we usually call "an ear for music," the truth of which, to those persons whose attention hath been directed to such enquiries, every day's experience must prove.

As it is the writer's intention, in the course of this work, to offer a few observations on the recently discovered mode of enquiry concerning the faculties of the human mind, and especially of that particular one belonging to colouring, he refrains from saying any thing further respecting it now; that, however, it may not be imagined that difficulties have been started, where no such difficulties are found to exist, he ventures, by way of authority for what has been advanced, to quote the sentiments of one of our most able professors on the subject of colouring; and as they are the opinions of an artist who arrived at great excellence in his profession, and whose writings at the same time evince a most profound knowledge of both the theory and the principles of his art, the reader need feel little hesitation in taking them as his guide.

"It has often been remarked," observes Mr. Opie, "that colours are to the eye, what flavours are to the palate, and sounds to the ear; and as music should not only be well composed and played in time and in tune, but the tones also of the voices and instruments should be touching and agreeable; so, in painting, the colours should not only be applied properly, but arranged with judgment and taste, but they should also be capable of affording pleasure by their own intrinsic beauty, by their brilliancy, freshness, harmony, and trans-



J. Opie RA pinx

Kiddell sc

John Opie Esq. R. S.



parency; these constitute the essence and exquisite flavour of colouring.

“ Richness and transparency may be obtained by glazing and passing the colours one over another without suffering them to mix; and harmony is secured by keeping up the same tone through the whole, and not at all by any sort of arrangement, as some have erroneously supposed. These circumstances will be plain and intelligible to all who are a little initiated in the theory and management of colours; but they will also find, to their sorrow, that brilliancy and freshness may easily be pushed into rawness and crudeness; that transparency may easily degenerate into flimsiness and want of solidity; that harmony easily slides into jaundice and mudiness; that spirit and cleanness of touch quickly run into hardness; and softness into woolliness and want of precision; and between these almost meeting extremes, who shall tell them when and where to stop? This is altogether beyond the power of words, and is attainable only by a good organ, long practice, and the study of nature and the best masters.” *

Another writer and artist, of no less celebrity, makes the following observations upon colouring. “ As the Florentine and Roman schools were gradually refined in the excellence of design and character, by the aid of philosophical studies, so the Venetian masters were equally indebted to the like studies, without which they would never have reached their admirable system of colouring. If any have conceived otherwise, they have taken a very superficial view of their system. Where is there greater science concerned than in the whole theory of colours? It employed the investigation of Newton; and shall that pass for a common or easy attainment which took up so much of his profound studies? The Venetian masters had been long working their way to the radical principles of this science, not only for a just and perfect arrangement of their colouring, but for that clear and transparent system in the use of

* Opie's Lectures.

it, which have equally marked that school in the days of its maturity under Titian. He it was who established, on unerring principles, founded on nature and truth, that accomplished system which John Bellini had first laboured to discover, and in which Giorgioni had made further advancements. Besides his zeal in his profession, Titian was born in that higher rank of life which might be supposed to give him an easier access to the elegant studies of philosophic science; and he had prosecuted, with great ardour, the science of chemistry, the better to understand the properties of colour, their homogeneous blendings, purity, and duration; as well as the properties of oils, gums, and other fluids, which might form the fittest vehicles to convey his colours upon canvass." *

Thus, it evidently appears, that the author has not over-rated the difficulties of attaining to excellence in colouring, nor will it be found, when these and the many other requisites attending the art are maturely considered, that he has estimated too highly the productions of either Sir Joshua Reynolds or his great contemporary, Wilson, in both of whose works so much excellence, especially in the particular under consideration, is manifestly displayed.

The failure of colouring, in some of Sir Joshua Reynolds's pictures, has, it is well known, occasionally excited remarks no less illiberal than they are unjust; and as I am anxious that no opportunity should be omitted of doing away any mistaken opinion which may prevail, prejudicial to the reputation of an artist so deserving of praise, I will repeat the observations of a writer who appears to have put the matter in a very judicious and proper point of view, conceiving that sentiments so liberal and praiseworthy cannot be too generally known.

I have, indeed, myself heard, on more occasions than one, some very uncharitable and harsh expressions used by persons when speaking upon this subject; more particularly, in the British Gallery, by a gentleman of no very inferior consequence, judging from the

* Galt's Life of West.



TITIEN VECELLI
Peintre, Né à Cadore, dans le Frioul, en 1477.
Mort à Venise, en 1576.

R. Le Lion, Sculp.





manner in which he was listened to, as well as the rank of several among his auditors, while contemplating the splendid examples of this master, with a sight of which the public were indulged last year. *

I have the greater pleasure in doing this, from the consideration that an opportunity is thereby afforded me not only of paying my tribute of respect to the memory of this justly celebrated artist, but that it enables me also, at the same time, to avail myself of an occasion of offering, together with this writer, my sincere acknowledgments for the signal benefit which the arts of this country have derived from the acquisition of that valuable and interesting establishment, the British Institution; to the founders and managers of which, and especially to the memory of the late Sir Thomas Barnard, who may deservedly be considered as one of the first and most zealous promoters of it, the public stand indebted in a very eminent degree.

“The colouring of Sir Joshua,” observes this writer, “which has deservedly been the subject of the highest admiration and praise, has also been the most familiar topic of animadversion and censure.

“In the pursuit of excellence he was certainly not content with treading in a beaten path, and as he always thought for himself, so he was constantly inventing new methods of practice. That he was sometimes unsuccessful cannot be denied; but after that display of his genius, for which we are so much indebted to the managers of the British Institution, it were as idle as unjust to dwell on minutiae, or partial defects, occasioned solely by his searching after beauties which no English painter has found in so great a perfection as himself. Upon due reflection, therefore, when the void be considered over which he passed, to arrive at his professional eminence, the astonishment ought to be, not that he produced so many, but so few exceptionable works: and even of those it is no exaggerated praise to

* It was even more than insinuated by the person alluded to, that Sir Joshua Reynolds was wanting in common honesty, in not having gratuitously repainted the portraits of those sitters whose pictures had become faded!

say, that as long as the true principles of art are admired, even his 'faded pictures' will be found to possess a superiority which has not been equalled by the best productions of the British school." *

"If any apology were necessary," observes Mr. Northcote, "for Sir Joshua's mode of practice, it may be found in his own words, in one of the fragments as preserved by Mr. Malone ; there he says, 'I was always willing to believe that my uncertainty of proceeding in my works, that is, my never being sure of my hand, and my frequent alterations arose from a refined taste which could not acquiesce in any thing short of a high degree of excellence. I had not an opportunity of being early initiated in the principles of *colouring*: no man, indeed, could teach me. If I have never been settled with respect to colouring, let it at the same time be remembered, that my unsteadiness in this respect proceeded from an inordinate desire to possess every kind of excellence that I saw in the works of others, without considering that there are in colouring, as in style, excellencies which are incompatible with each other ; however this pursuit, or indeed any other similar pursuit, prevents the artist from being tired of his art. We all know how often those masters, who sought after colouring, changed their manner ; whilst others, merely from not seeing various modes, acquiesced all their lives in that with which they set out. On the contrary, I tried every effect of colour, and by leaving out every colour in its turn, showed every colour that I could do without. As I alternately left out every colour, I tried every new colour ; and after, as is well known, failed. The former practice, I am aware, may be compared by those whose first object is ridicule, to that of the poet mentioned in the Spectator, who, in a poem of twenty-four books, contrived in each book to leave out a letter. But I was influenced by no such idle or foolish affectation. My fickleness in the mode of colouring arose from an eager desire to attain the highest excellence. This is the only merit I can assume to myself from my conduct in that respect.'

* Life of Raphael, p. 34.



Engraved by Ridley from an Original Painting by Opie.

James C. Northcote Esq. R. A.



“The best answer, perhaps,” continues, Mr. Northcote, “to all the objections made to Sir Joshua’s colouring, is the following anecdote :

“One of these critics, who passed for a great patron of art, was complaining strongly to a judicious friend, of Sir Joshua’s ‘flying colours,’ and expressing great regret at the circumstance, as it prevented him from having his picture painted by the President. To all this his friend calmly replied, that he should reflect, that any painter who merely wished to make his colours stand, had only to purchase them at the first colour shop he might come to ; but that it must be remembered, that every picture of Sir Joshua’s was an experiment of art made by an ingenious man, and *that the art advanced by such experiments, even where they failed.*”

Upon the subject of pictures, considered as property in a pecuniary point of view, the greater stress has been laid, as it is well known that, with many persons, especially in a mercantile country like our own, such considerations have very material weight ; and so indispensably necessary to the development of genius, and the consequent advancement of art, does the author consider encouragement and patronage, that he is particularly desirous of holding out to those possessing the means, every possible inducement to come forward in supporting, with a liberal and fostering hand, the very superior talents which our own country must be allowed to possess ; whereby, as hath been seen, such substantial advantages may accrue to themselves, and by which, at the same time, they have it in their power so materially to promote the welfare and renown of the community to which they belong. Money thus bestowed may be said, like the quality of mercy, to “be twice blessed ; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”

It was only after the former part of his work had been gone to press, that the author was struck with the following piece of information, (contained in a very interesting weekly publication,) which is so highly creditable to the parties concerned. It is, indeed, with

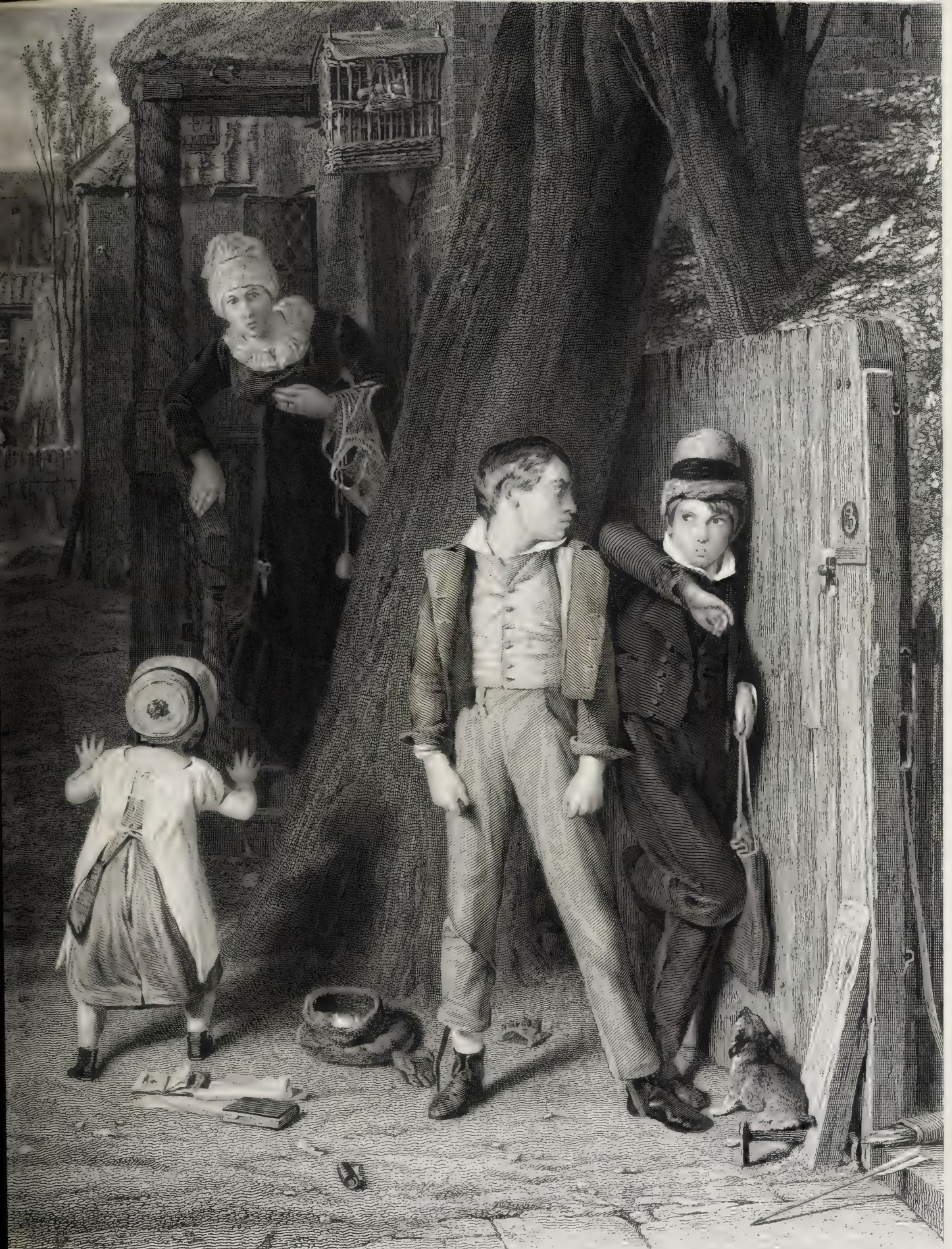
sentiments of real gratification, that he records instances of such signal and praiseworthy liberality in favour of the arts.

“ Were it generally understood, that to speculate on the best productions of the English school were a profitable species of traffic, the active spirit of commerce, which is so marked an attribute of our dearly beloved country, would not only be seen bustling at our exhibitions, but making morning calls at the artists’ studies, to forestall and regrade, ere the graphic wares were consigned to the market of taste. We, however, could enumerate many instances of the advantages of this species of traffic of late, and venture to anticipate, that the time is not very remote, when to speculate in works of art will be an object of no mean interest with the British merchant.

“ A recent circumstance will serve to illustrate this presumption. The well known ‘ Wolf and the Lamb,’ a cabinet picture, which does honour to modern art, painted by Mulready, was purchased by our present most gracious Sovereign. It is a recent performance.* The Committee of the Artists’ Benevolent Fund, among other plans for augmenting the means of that excellent institution, proposed occasionally to have an engraving executed from some choice specimen of the English school, to publish it, and apply the profits to the furtherance of that object. His Majesty, with his accustomed goodness, granted the loan of this picture. A rising artist was engaged to execute an engraving from it for the sum of eight hundred guineas ; proposals have been issued for subscriptions, and the affair is in a promising state of progress.

“ Messrs. Hurst and Robinson, the worthy and liberal successors of that great patron of the fine arts, the late venerable Boydell, with a spirit congenial to their predecessor, hearing of the plan, opened a correspondence with the committee, observing, that as they understood one of the objects for this publication was to increase the funds

* The “ Wolf and the Lamb,” or the representation of a great savage boy tyrannising over a meek little urchin scarcely half his size, was exhibited at Somerset House in 1820.



of their charitable institution, they were ready, if agreeable to the committee, to take the concern on their own hands, to fulfil their engagement with the engraver, pay him the proposed sum, and as a *douceur*, to present the institution with the sum of one thousand pounds !” *

* Somerset House Gazette, May 1. 1824.

CHAP. II.

PATRONAGE NECESSARY TO THE ARTIST.—THE FINE ARTS MATTER OF INCONSIDERABLE INTEREST WITH THE PUBLIC IN GREAT BRITAIN.—WANT OF ENCOURAGEMENT IN HISTORICAL PAINTING.—WORKS RELATING TO THE FINE ARTS LITTLE READ.—ASSISTANCE OF GOVERNMENT REQUIRED IN SUPPORT OF THE ARTS.—A PURE TASTE A NATIONAL BENEFIT.—PROGRESS OF THE ARTS THE MEASURE OF REFINEMENT IN A STATE.—THEIR CULTIVATION MORE AN OBJECT OF CONCERN IN OTHER COUNTRIES.—BONAPARTE.—FRANCE.—RUSSIA.—ROYAL ACADEMY.—BRITISH INSTITUTION.—RAPID ADVANCE OF ART IN ENGLAND NOTWITHSTANDING THE IMPEDIMENTS EXPERIENCED.—EXPENSE ATTENDING A LIBERAL PATRONAGE OF THE ARTS AND ARTISTS BY GOVERNMENT A TRIFLING CONSIDERATION.—UNFORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH HAVE CONCURRED TO PREVENT THE INTERFERENCE OF GOVERNMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE ARTS.—MR. FOX.—MR. PITT.—MR. PERCEVAL.—HIS PRESENT MAJESTY.—SIR JOHN LEICESTER.—MR. FAWKES.—MR. CHARLES LONG.—MR. SHEE.—SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT.

BUT while the writer thus stoops from that more elevated point of view in which the fine arts ought ever to be held, let it not for a moment be supposed that higher considerations are otherwise than uppermost in his mind. Money, alas ! it is undoubtedly true, must be necessarily obtained, or how is it possible for the artist to go on with his work ? Money, however, is to the real votary, enamoured of his art, the very last consideration in its pursuit. But as “ a great work,” it has been well observed, “ cannot now be the production of indigence and obscurity, for it is the labour of years, pursued through many arduous studies, and assisted by a variety of models, — requiring a number of local and mechanical facilities, and attended, consequently, with considerable expense,” in what possible way can an artist hope to succeed without patronage and support ?

“ It is the want of reward,” says Helvetius, “ which occasions the want of talents of every description.” Great men will always come when they are called ; — when they are supplied with the motive and the means ; — when the occasion is worthy of the character, and

the exertion is rivalled by the remuneration. Generous patronage has never yet failed to produce great artists in other countries ; what effects it would have in our own is worth an experiment at least, one might think, to ascertain. For it is a mistake unworthy of an enlightened government to conceive that the arts, left to the influence of ordinary events, turned loose upon society to fight and scramble in the rude and revolting contest of coarser occupation, can ever arrive at that perfection which contributes so materially to the permanent glory of a state.

In Great Britain, indeed, the fine arts seem never to have been viewed by the public as a national object, nor to have experienced from the state that paternal protection, which less prosperous countries have been forward to bestow. We have been always cold, and until lately most unkind, to their interest.

“ That no branch of the art of painting,” observes a distinguished amateur, “ is calculated to produce sentiments more exalted or pleasures more refined than that of historical painting, every one must allow ; that none has hitherto so little flourished in this country, every one must regret.

“ The little ardour hitherto evinced among us in the pursuit of historical painting, may be partly attributed to the slender prospect which the artist has, of being adequately rewarded for so laborious and so difficult a production of human intellect and hand, as an excellent historical picture. The finest historical picture, held at a price equal to its real value, would precisely be the work likely to hang longest unsold on the walls of the British Gallery.”*

The fine arts being thus acknowledged to be matter of such little interest with the public, (for with the great body of the intelligent part of the nation their influence is neither felt, nor does it seem to be at all aware of their importance to the commerce and the renown of the kingdom,) the author could have no very sanguine expectation that any arguments which he might be able to advance,

* Costume of the Ancients. Preface. By Thomas Hope.

upon a subject which has been so ably handled by writers distinguished for ability, as well in the use of the pen as in that of the pencil, should attract notice ; he cannot, however, feel satisfied, whilst writing upon such matters, without venturing to offer his feeble effort in aid of soliciting attention to a subject of such vital importance, and to endeavour, if possible, to draw the minds of his readers to the consideration of what is so materially connected with the best interests and the respectable name of every country in the civilised portion of the globe.

With a view, therefore, of impressing such sentiments on the minds of the few who may be led to look into this volume, — “ to stir with his pebble the slumbering lake of public feeling on the subject of the arts,” — he ventures to point out some considerations which have struck him as worthy of the serious regard of every sincere well-wisher to the prosperity and reputation of his country.

In endeavouring to do this, he is not so vain as to flatter himself with the idea of advancing any thing which may not perhaps have been suggested before ; much less does he pretend to arrogate to himself the merit of the very able and forcible reasoning which he proposes to offer on the occasion : the only aim which he aspires to, is to reiterate, with the hope of being heard, the arguments that have been used by other writers of well-known ability and experience, but which, from the apathy and indifference too generally prevailing, have, it is to be feared, made little impression.

In treating upon a subject of so little interest to the public mind, it could not escape the writer, that something more than a mere dry disquisition on the utility of the arts must be produced, before it could be expected that his work should be read. Of the necessity of this, he has experienced a convincing proof, in the fate of his repeated applications respecting the very printing of his work ; two different booksellers of the first respectability in the metropolis having, some years ago, when at the instance of his friends the author first entertained the idea of giving the result of his researches to the world, successively declined the publishing of it, upon the consider-

ation that works respecting subjects connected with the fine arts, meet with no encouragement from the public. Such a reply, coming from different channels, might, it may be imagined, have been sufficient to damp the ardour of his mind ; and accordingly the thing was entirely given up. In consequence however of having been again urged on the subject, he was induced to repeat his application.

Judging from the success which the renewed proposal has experienced, it would seem that a similar feeling is found still to prevail, the writer having received from one of the first publishers in town the following reply, viz.

“ From the uncertain demand for works connected with the fine arts, we would rather decline speculating on the publication of your work respecting Wilson ; should you, however, be disposed to be at the expense of printing, &c., we will with pleasure publish it for you on the usual terms.”

Although in the publication of the author's work, *profit* was the very last thing that entered his mind, still, pecuniary considerations are not to be altogether despised ; in the hope, therefore, that his friends may not prove mistaken in their calculation on the occasion ; and that, should such be the case, some trifling emolument may arise, in aid of the very laudable and benevolent institution, for the benefit of which the present volume is intended to be sold, he has hesitated no longer in putting it in print ; trusting, that as “ charity covereth a multitude of sins,” the present undertaking may not, through the kindness and liberality of the public, be reckoned among the number of his.

Influenced by the above-mentioned considerations, and being willing to believe that the reader may, perhaps, be led to the notice of that which it is the writer's ambition to enforce, viz., the pleasure and the advantage which the cultivation of the fine arts cannot fail to afford, not only to the individual, but to the community at large, he has endeavoured to render his volume somewhat more attractive, by the occasional introduction of topics, which may by some, perhaps, be thought too little connected with the subject of his work. By way of apology, and in some degree of vindication, the writer cannot,

he thinks, do better than offer as his own, the words of an author, who appears to have felt himself in a similar situation.

“I sensibly feel that some parts of these memoirs may be judged tedious, some parts weak, and other parts not sufficiently connected with the original subject; but I apprehend that, in a variety of readers, some will be pleased with what others will despise, and that one who presumes to give a public dinner, must provide, as well as he is able, a dish for each particular palate; so that if I have given too much, it is at my own risk, and from an earnest desire to satisfy every one.” *

That the patronage held forth by many individuals and noble characters needs no spur, the author is most ready to allow; the means, indeed, projected by other spirited individuals in opulent stations, for extending and perpetuating the works of British masters, fall short in no degree of the most fervid energies and examples of which any country has been able to boast. But it is impossible to resist the conviction, that, unless the government can be induced to show some sensibility towards their interests, the arts, as liberal ornaments and moral agents, as instruments to promote refinement and preserve the fame of a people, (by which is meant more particularly the epic style, or historical painting,) must at no very distant period be utterly extinguished among us. No other resource, indeed, seems left for them but in the liberality—in the policy of the state; and unless some public exertion be made in their favour, they must sink under the difficulties which neither zeal, industry, nor genius can withstand.

“What is the wonder,” observes a writer of much discernment, “of every enlightened foreigner who visits this country? It is, that out of thousands and millions voted by parliament, nothing is proposed for the encouragement of historical painting. Sculpture is fairly encouraged; but painting is positively thwarted. The directors of the British Institution, who deserve the sincere thanks of every friend to taste and refinement, for having raised the value of British art,

* Northcote's *Life of Reynolds*.

applied to the government for the small sum of five thousand pounds annually, to assist them in their meritorious endeavours, and this small sum was refused ! What would Denon say to this ? The present state of historical painting in England is owing to the energy of its artists' minds, backed, certainly, by the laudable institution which I have mentioned. And, to be sure, there is some consolation, or rather cause for exultation, in this very circumstance. Yes ! energy of mind, and vigour of talent, will force their way to greatness, in spite of every neglect, and of every obstruction, that tasteless apathy can plant in their path ;—and the painters of England are making their way in a nobler track, and at a swifter rate, than any others of the present time, although they have no public patronage, and almost no natural encouragement,—although the government denies, and individuals neglect them,—although the fogs of the nation are thick, and its days are short, and its people, generally, not prone to run their pretensions to taste before their actual feelings.” *

When we consider the very trifling charge at which all the great objects resulting from an enlightened national patronage of the arts might be obtained ; it seems extraordinary that a people, generous to prodigality in every other department of expense, should, in this instance, have so long betrayed a parsimony as ungracious as it is ineffectual. Can it be thought consistent with the liberality, the dignity, the glory, or the sound and comprehensively understood interests, of this great empire, to remain the only example of a civilised nation indifferent to those softeners of human life, those refiners of the rough and drossy ore of humanity, the support and protection of which have been, in all ages and countries, amongst the primary objects of politicians and the philosopher ? Shall it be said of Britain, that from the millions supplied by her industry and wealth, to answer the exigencies of the state, for all the purposes of power and commerce, not a sovereign can be spared to promote her moral ascendancy,—her intellectual triumphs ; to save her arts from utter

* Scott's Visit to Paris.

extinction, or to co-operate with those praiseworthy efforts, which oppressed and desponding individuals have made with such perseverance and success. In vain, however, will it be expected, that they can maintain the honourable position they have taken, if timely succours are not afforded to them ; if the spirited sallies of genius are not seconded by those resources of vigour and defence, which the state only can effectually supply ; and which the peculiar desertion of all the ordinary powers of support has rendered indispensable to their very existence.

The object is, surely, well worth an exertion, for our morals are materially connected with our arts, and a good taste not only refines, but reforms. But as a state becomes enriched, not by the collection of ancient coins in the cabinets of the curious, but by the active circulation of its present currency ; so, also, a pure taste is established in a nation, not by hoarding old pictures in the galleries of the great, but by the employment of its living talents, and the circulation of its arts.

The patronage so generally dispensed in Greece and in Italy, without which the arts could never have attained their high meridian, was for the protection of living genius ; and they by whom it was so dispensed, sought no other collections than the works of native and living artists. On any other ground, there can be no such thing as patronage. Nothing else is worthy the name. The true and generous patron of great works selects those which are produced by talents existing around him. By collecting from other countries, he may greatly enrich himself, but can never give celebrity to the country in which he lives. “The encouragement extended to the genius of a single artist in the higher classes of art,” to use the words of the late President of the Royal Academy, “though it may produce but one single original work, adds more to the celebrity of a people, and is a higher proof of true patriotic ardour, and of a generous love for the progress of art, than all the collections that were ever made by the productions of other countries, and the expenditures that were ever bestowed in making them.” *

* Galt's Life of West.



APERIAM TERRAS GENTIBUS.



*Drawn & Engraved by W. Bond.
from a statue seen in the Bodleian Library. Copied.*

London: Printed by W. Bond.

A pure taste is of the first order of national benefits ; it is a talisman which adorns every thing that it touches, within the magic circle of its sway ; —there is nothing too high for its influence or too low for its attention ; and while it mounts on wings of fire, with the poet and the painter, “to the highest heaven of invention,” it descends with humble diligence to the aid of the mechanic at the anvil and the loom.

Pre-eminence in the polite arts is, indeed, a distinction worthy the ambition of a powerful state, (as no enlightened observer of mankind has ever hesitated to assert,) and the possession of a pure taste which, wherever it exists, like a penetrating spirit, purifies and improves, informs and animates, the whole mass of national ability, from the lowest example of its application to the highest exercise of its power, is an object of the greatest interest, not only to the painter but to the politician—to the moralist as well as to the manufacturer.

“The progress of the arts in every country is the exact and exclusive measure of the progress of refinement, — they are reciprocally the cause and effect of each other ; and hence we accordingly find that the most enlightened, the most envied, and the most interesting periods in the history of mankind are precisely those in which the arts have been most esteemed, most cultivated, and have reached their highest points of elevation. To this the bright æras of Alexander the Great and Leo the Tenth owe their strongest, their most amiable, and their most legitimate claims to our respect, admiration, and gratitude ; this is their highest and their only undivided honour ; and, if not the column itself, it is certainly (to borrow a metaphor from a celebrated orator) ‘the Corinthian capital of their fame.’”*

That the governments of other nations are actuated by views far more extended and enlightened than our own, as far as regards the subject under consideration, it would be most easy to show, there being examples without end of their liberality in the support and encouragement of the arts.

* Opie's Lectures.

Whatever may be thought of the late Emperor of the French, or the unjustifiable means which he used to accomplish his end, it is allowed, on all hands, that to exalt into notice the reputation and renown of the empire which he had so fraudulently usurped, was the grand and ultimate object which ever influenced his mind. To effect this, though arms was his trade, what, let it be asked, were the means which he used? The plunder which the Louvre so lately contained,—the academies at home,—the very numerous *écoles centrales* formed in the different departments under his control,—the splendid establishments, and the unexecuted projects connected with art, sufficiently testify in what, according to his view of things, the glory and the prosperity of a nation consist.

“Fas est, et ab hoste doceri.” *

“So far back as the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, French students of promise used to be sent, at the public expense, to a French academy, which, for the purpose of placing them at once in the very midst of the finest remains of ancient art, had been established in the very centre of Rome; and notwithstanding the French government has caused” (this was published in 1809) “so many of the movable *chef-d’œuvres* of Italy to be transported to the heart of France itself, it nevertheless has still improved even the establishment at Rome, in order that French artists might retain the advantage of contemplating and of studying the many immovable monuments of ancient art, which must live and die in their native soil.” †

It is not proposed to intrude upon the reader an enumeration of the examples which neighbouring states afford, where every where around us may be seen the liberal efforts which their respective governments have made, and are still making, towards the accomplishment of so desirable an end. There is one instance, however, which, as it is belonging to an empire fast rising into eminence in the scale of the civilised world, shows so clearly the sentiments of its rulers, and

* “Receive instruction from an enemy.” † Costume of the Ancients, by T. Hope.

how very much they consider its advancement to depend on the cultivation of taste, that I cannot refrain from noticing it here.

In the Academic Correspondence for 1803, may be found the following communication from the secretary of the Imperial Academy of Painting of Petersburg, viz. "The munificence of our sovereign is unquestionably the most solid and infallible support that can be found for the advancement of our artists. Influenced by this principle, his majesty, the reigning emperor, has deigned not only to increase the salaries of the professors and other persons employed in the academy, but still further to extend his bounty by lately appropriating, for the maintenance of the institution, the annual sum of 146,000 roubles, instead of sixty thousand formerly assigned for that purpose, and by moreover adding the yearly sum of 10,000 roubles for the payment of those artists whose works shall be judged worthy of adorning public institutions."

In another part of the same communication will be seen the following passage: "The academy has had the advantage of experiencing a fresh proof of his majesty the emperor's favour, by seeing several of its members recently decorated with various orders of the empire."

Shall England, then, so wealthy, so exalted, and so renowned for every thing else, be the only country indifferent, in a national point of view, to the advancement of the fine arts? Forbid it heaven!

Could but government be induced to come forward in a liberal manner, in support of so interesting a cause, the effects likely to be produced in this country, by the animating powers of national patronage, are beyond calculation; and there is the strongest reason for believing, that if the field of taste were properly protected, it would not prove

"A soil ungrateful to the tiller's care."

DRYDEN.

For without any adequate assistance, nay, obstructed and oppressed by circumstances peculiarly hostile to their interests, the arts of Eng-

land have already advanced beyond our hopes, and taken precedence of their age. What might we not, therefore, anticipate from their exertions, were they but to experience those inspiring proofs of public estimation, which, in all former instances, have been essential to their existence?

It may not, perhaps, be so generally known, especially to those little conversant with subjects relating to art, that of those institutions which have been formed in this country (the British Museum excepted) for the cultivation of the arts, the public stand no way indebted to the state, either for their foundation or their support.

The Royal Academy, an establishment which ought to be national and comprehensive; which should include within its walls every thing that is essential, expedient, or inviting to the progress of the student; which should rest on a foundation worthy of the freest, the richest, the most powerful, and the most generous people on earth, and which, by foreigners, is supposed to be a splendid example of public munificence, derives its income from the disinterested labour of artists; possesses not a single original example of the old masters; and, excepting the advantage of apartments in Somerset House, has not, for many years, received the smallest assistance from the state! *

The British Institution, formed expressly for the improvement of the public taste, with a view to the encouragement of the arts, has received, excepting the king's name, neither aid nor countenance from the state.

If under such disadvantages, the arts have risen to so pre-eminent a pitch in this country; to what a degree of splendour might we not expect them to attain, were but stronger stimuli applied in their cultivation, and without which, indeed, they may be expected rather to degenerate than advance; and the writer has no hesitation to assert,

* "As there is no national fund furnished for the support of its schools of instruction, the sums raised for that important object are only derived from the multitudes who flock thither, and who pay their shilling for the sight." — *Somerset House Gazette*, May 1. 1824.



Benj. West. R. C.

that from the productions of living genius, at this moment in Great Britain, might be produced examples of excellence in every department of art, that would adorn the noblest collections, and reflect honour on any age or nation ; “ for it is no flattery to the present æra in Britain, to say,” in the words of Mr. West, “ that in no age of the world have the arts been carried in any country to such a summit as they now hold among us, in so short a period as half a century at most. Amongst the Greeks, some centuries had elapsed amidst no little emulation in the arts before they obtained an Apelles. In modern Italy, without going so far back as we might, it took up a century from the appearance of Massaccio to the perfection of Raffaëlle. If then the British School has risen so much more rapidly to that celebrity in art, which it is too well known and established to need any illustration here, what should hinder her professors from becoming the most distinguished rivals of the fame acquired by the Greeks and Italians, with a due perseverance in the studies which lead to perfection, and with those encouragements and supports of patronage which are due to genius ?” *

The testimony which has been produced, together with such examples of excellence as we every year witness in our public exhibitions, sufficiently justify the author, it may be presumed, in having made use of the language of praise, however lavish of it he may have been when speaking of the artists of our own country, as compared more particularly with those of other nations. The fact, indeed, of our superiority, as Mr. West very justly observes, is too well known and established to admit of a doubt ; nothing, therefore, but the support alluded to, is wanting to render us still more pre-eminently distinguished. Surely, then, in concerns so important, there can be no room for the consideration of petty economy, for the demurrings of estimate and calculation ;—there is an expense which enriches and adorns a state, and an economy which impoverishes and degrades it. The one is the enlightened policy of the merchant, con-

* Galt's Life of West.

nected with the commerce of the world ; who calculates on the broad scale of profit and loss, comprehends remote advantages, combines complicated operations, and pours out his funds with apparent profusion, through a thousand outlets of hazardous adventure, secure in the general result of his principles, and calmly tracing the progress of his interests through all their circuitous channels of return : the other, in the short-sighted solicitude of the pedlar, whose ideas are confined to his counter ; who, incapable of generalised views or extended operations, sees not beyond the first links of vulgar advantage ; but casting up, in his terrified imagination, the paltry items of daily disbursement, suffers the apprehensions of expense to overcome the hopes of profit, till he has neither understanding to speculate, nor spirit to adventure.

It is the policy of a great nation to be liberal and magnificent ; to be free of her rewards, splendid in her establishments, and gorgeous in her public works. These are not the expenses that sap and mine the foundations of public prosperity, that break in upon the capital, or lay waste the income of the state ; they may be said to arise in her most enlightened views of general advantage, to be amongst her best and most profitable speculations ; they produce large returns of respect and consideration from our neighbours and competitors, of patriotic exultation amongst ourselves ; they make men proud of their country, and, from priding in it, prompt in its defence ; they play upon the chords of generous feeling, elevate us above the animal and the machine, and make us triumph in the powers and attributes of man.

As far as the interference of government would be required, every thing necessary, or even expedient, to the liberal patronage of the arts and artists in this powerful and wealthy empire, might be effected with, comparatively, a very trifling expense, and such as could scarcely be felt by the public at large ; an expense, in fact, not worthy a moment's consideration, when compared with the object to be obtained.

Whatever may be the power or prosperity of a state, whatever the accumulation of her wealth or the splendour of her triumphs, to her intellectual attainments must she look for national estimation, on her arts must she depend

“ For living dignity and deathless fame.”

They are the vital principle — the breathing soul of empire, which, after its cumbrous body has decayed, after it has “ shaken off the mortal coil” of greatness, survives, in spiritual vigour, throughout the long futurity of time.

“ What now of all that Rome or Athens graced,
In war or conquest — wealth or splendour placed?
Their gods — their godlike heroes, princes, powers,
Imperial triumphs, and time-braving towers?
What now of all that social life refined,
Subdued — enslaved — or civilised mankind?
What now remains? — save what the Muse imparts,
Relate their ruins or unfold their arts.”

Their influence has been acknowledged in all ages ; and their interests have been protected in all countries in proportion as man became more enlightened, and the principles of society have been better understood.

The present and the future are alike within the grasp of their power ; they harmonise the temples of the living, and they perpetuate the memory of the dead. They are the crystals of immortality, in which all the forms of greatness are imperishably fixed to gratify the wondering eye of time.

If there be a nation in which we might expect more particularly to behold their powers protected with public solicitude, and their advancement a general concern, it is Great Britain ; for what other state has such a treasure to confide to their charge? — such triumphs to transmit — such heroes to commemorate? Where shall we find, in such glittering abundance, the materials of renown? Had the ancients

possessed them ; had Greece or Rome, in the zenith of their glory, been able

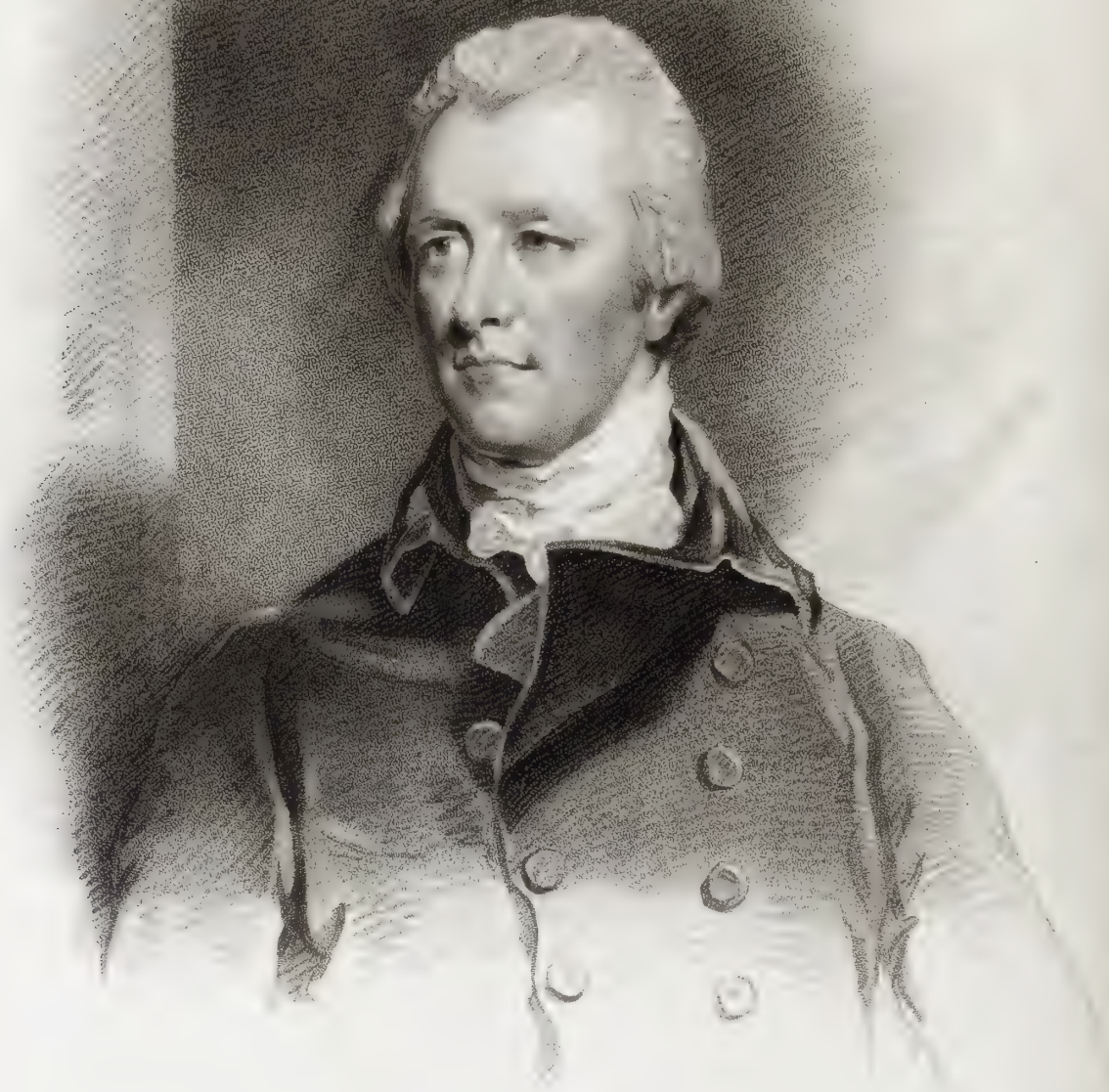
“ To boast of heroes, statesmen, bards divine,
That bright in Albion’s happier annals shine,
What wondrous works had grateful taste assay’d !
What monumental miracles display’d !”

In as far as relates to that assistance and support which might be reasonably expected from government, through the medium of those at the head of affairs in this country, it would really seem as if some fatality had attended the advancement of art. On several different occasions we have known that there has been the very greatest reason for believing that the matter was about to be accomplished, the subject having, in more instances than one, obtained the consideration and the consent of the minister of the day, when, unfortunately, the expectations so repeatedly held out in consequence of the conviction having been brought home to his mind, of their utility to the state, have always, by some unlucky chance or other, been destined to meet with only disappointment and defeat.

As the circumstances and events alluded to are curious in themselves, and cannot but excite considerable interest from the novelty as well as from the unhappy particulars with which they are connected, the author will endeavour to give them in as concise a manner as he is able.

Mr. Galt, in his Life of the late President of the Royal Academy, remarks, “ how extremely sorrowful that artist was, when he reflected that hitherto the British Government had done nothing decidedly with a view to promote the cultivation of those arts, which may be justly said to constitute the olive wreath on the brows of every nation.”

At the particular period that Mr. West was at Paris, it so happened, that, in consequence of some repairs that were going on, the galleries of the Louvre were closed to the public for a time. When, however, his arrival was known, a deputation from the central



THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM PITT.

Portrait by HEDDER ESQ R.A. in the original
RIGHT HON. LORD MELBOURNE



To the Independent Clergy of the City of Westminster,

This 'PRINT' of

THE RIGHT HON^{BLE} C. J. FOX,

Is respectfully dedicated by their very humble servant,

J. Bryden

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administration of the arts, under whose care the collections were particularly placed, waited on Mr. West, and informed him, that orders were given to admit him and his friends at all times. Denon was at the head of this deputation, and in the course of the conversation which then took place, that accomplished enthusiast explained to Mr. West, most circumstantially, the extensive views entertained by the French Government with respect to the arts, mentioning several of the superb schemes which were formed by the First Consul for the decoration of the capital. The subject naturally turned very much on the importance of the arts to all nations aspiring to fame and eminence; and Mr. West very soon perceived, that the vast collections of trophies which adorned the Louvre, had not been formed so much for ostentatious exhibition, as with a view to furnish models of study for artists; constituting, in fact, but the elementary part of a grand system of national decoration, designed by Bonaparte, and by which he expected to leave such memorials to posterity as would convince the world that his magnificence was worthy of his military glory.

In his visit to the Louvre, Mr. West was joined by Mr. Fox, who was also at Paris at the same time. While viewing the pictures, Mr. West took the opportunity of endeavouring to explain in what manner he considered the cultivation of the fine arts of the utmost importance, even in a commercial point of view, to England.

Mr. Fox paid great attention to what he said, and observed, in a tone of regret, "I have been rocked in the cradle of politics from my infancy, and never before was so much struck with the advantage, even in a political bearing, of the fine arts, to the prosperity, as well as the renown, of a kingdom; and I do assure you, Mr. West, that if ever I have it in my power to influence government to promote the arts, the conversation that we have had to-day shall not be forgotten." The subject was also mentioned some time afterwards to Mr. Pitt, who was then in power, and the proposal was received by him with much apparent sincerity. But a disastrous

series of public events about the same time commenced ; the attention of the minister was absorbed in the immediate peril of the state ; and he fell a victim to his anxieties, without having had it in his power to further the objects of the association which had carried its application before him.

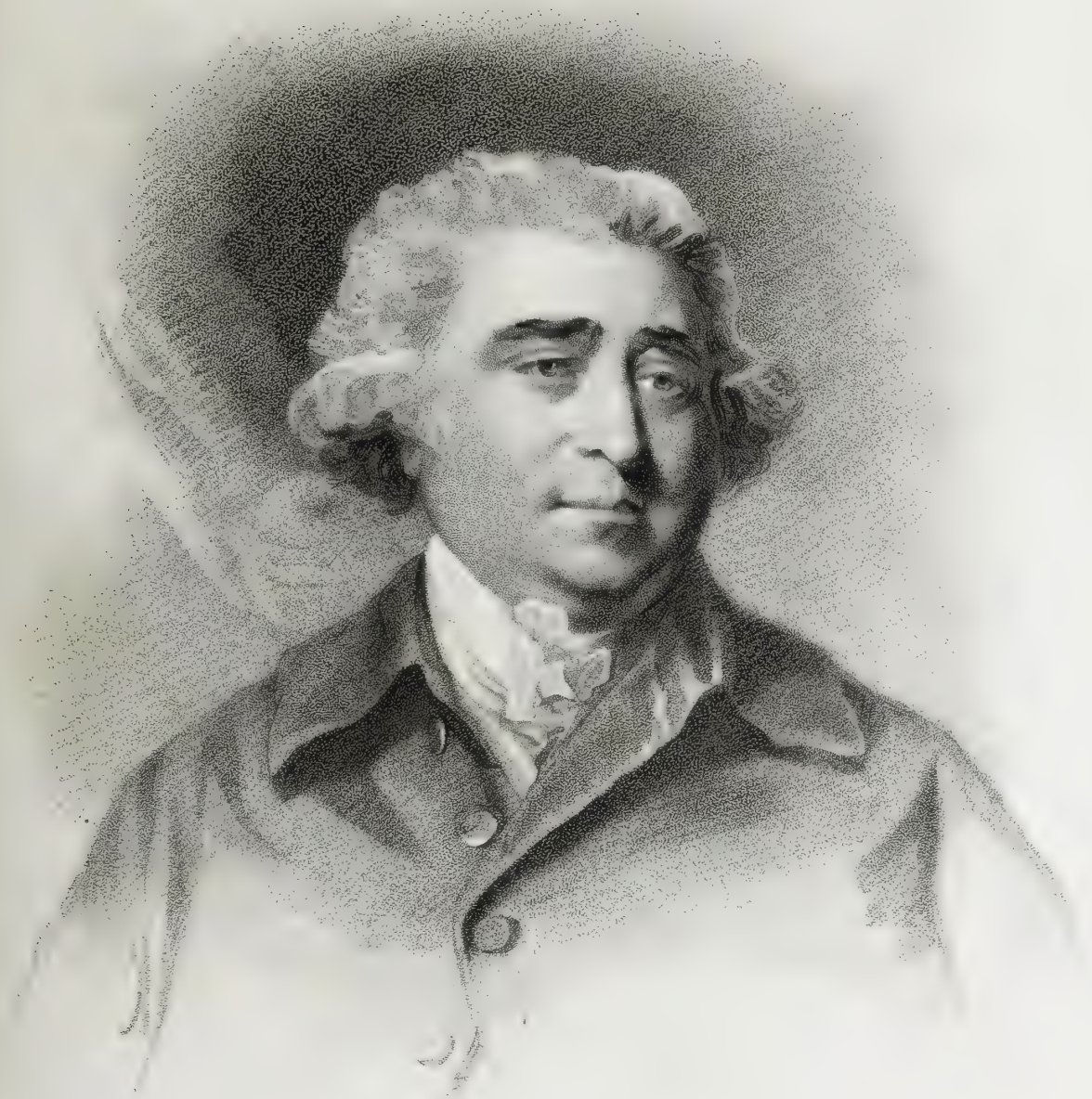
At the death of his great rival, Mr. Fox came into office, and he soon after called on Mr. West, and reminding him of the conversation in the gallery of the Louvre, said, “ It is my earnest intention, as soon as I am firmly seated in the saddle, to redeem the promise that I then made.” But he also was frustrated in his intentions, and fell a sacrifice to disease, without being able to take any step in the business.

Notwithstanding that Mr. Perceval, as it would appear, was little disposed to entertain any enlightened notions on the subject of the fine arts, he was, nevertheless, induced a short time before his lamented death to alter his opinion concerning their utility. The occasion which gave rise to this change in his sentiments was the following incident : —

“ At the anniversary dinner in 1812, before the opening of the exhibition at Somerset House, he was present with other public characters. On the right hand of the President was seated the Lord Chancellor Eldon, on his left Lord Liverpool, and on the right of the Chancellor Mr. Perceval. A conversation took place, naturally inspired by the circumstances of the meeting, in which Mr. West recapitulated what he had formerly so often urged ; and Mr. Perceval perceiving the impression which his observations made on those to whom they were particularly addressed, requested him to put his ideas on the subject in writing, and he would lay it before the Prince Regent. This took place on Saturday, on Wednesday Mr. West delivered his memorial ; on the Friday following Mr. Perceval was assassinated ; and since that time nothing further has been done in the business.” *

It is well known, that on one occasion his present Majesty,

* Galt's Life of West.



THE RIGHT HON: CHARLES JAMES FOX.

*From an original Picture by SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS in the Possession of the
Right Hon Lord Holland.*





previously to his having ascended the throne, was pleased to honour the academy with his august presence as Prince Regent, at one of these anniversary dinners. The author is not just at the moment able to recollect the year precisely when this memorable event took place, though he is greatly inclined to believe that it was soon after the period alluded to, and was, perhaps, principally occasioned by the feeling then generally excited in favour of the arts, in consequence of Mr. West's patriotic endeavours in their behalf. We cannot but suppose, indeed, that, with the enlarged and very enlightened views which his Majesty on all occasions entertains, he could not fail to be impressed with a course of reasoning, and with arguments so unanswerably conclusive. The circumstance made much noise at the time, and the most sanguine hopes were then entertained by all well-wishers to their country and the arts, (the newspapers of the day teemed with expressions of the kind,) that some further steps would be taken, which might tend to bring into notice and distinction the hitherto neglected arts of our country.

That his Majesty has not remained unmindful of such important considerations, his donation to the academy of casts from the antique, and other marks of his royal attention to the establishment, sufficiently testify.* But it is well known to every one, that, in this country, the public purse is not at the disposal of the sovereign; and that, unlike the roubles of Russia or the Napoleons of France, the money of John Bull is far differently dispensed; for, however willingly inclined our excellent monarch may be to "increase" (if that were possible to be increased or added to, which never had any existence at all) "the salaries of the professors:" and to encourage the art, by "adding a yearly sum for the payment of those artists, whose works should be judged worthy of adorning public institutions †," no such power, all-powerful as a king of Great Britain is acknowledged

* The order for the purchase of the Angerstein collection was given subsequently to the writing of the above observations.

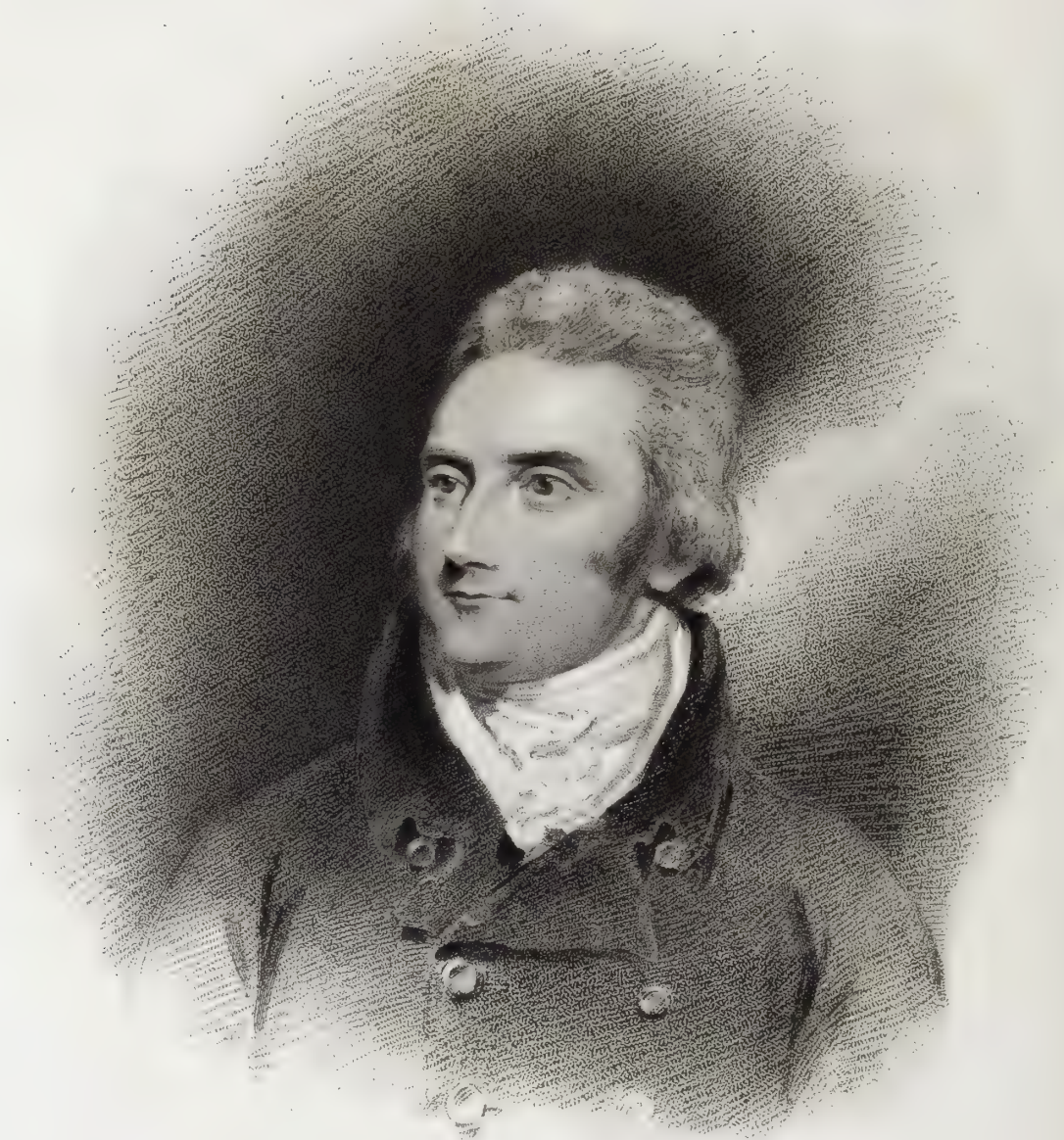
† Vide Academical Correspondence, as above quoted.

to be, is thought fit to be delegated to his hand, until sanctioned by the concurrent voice of the people of his realm.

Thus, it appears, that in every other country the fine arts have been considered, in a political point of view, as objects deserving of countenance and support. Surely, then, it is high time, in this enlightened age, and in such prosperous times, that public exertion be made in their favour, and that something like patronage and liberal encouragement should emanate from government.

With every other rank in the community possessing the means, nothing has been wanting, as far as opportunity or ability could allow. The late King, the great patron of art, has well done his share ; his present Majesty has performed a great deal ; the nobility and opulent gentry of the land have been singularly conspicuous in their exertions ; and the splendid collections of paintings, the works of English artists alone, and which are with so much liberality allowed to be seen in the galleries, especially, of Sir John Leicester and Mr. Fawkes, sufficiently testify, that neither patronage nor encouragement, liberality nor munificence, are wanting to give spur to the talent or the exertions of our professors ; besides which, numbers of individuals, in addition to those above named, have, as far as their circumstances would permit, been forward in their endeavours to patronise and support the artists of the day.

Nothing then remains for us to desire or to hope, but that, since three successive ministers, men of established ability and most comprehensive in their views, have not hesitated to express their wishes and intentions, founded upon sound reasoning and mature deliberation, of encouraging the arts, some subsequent premier may be found, who shall be influenced by feelings equally patriotic. What an opportunity is here open to such a one for acquiring immortality and fame ! Acting, too, under the sanction of names so respectable and revered as those above mentioned, his predecessors, how very greatly must that weight of responsibility be diminished, which, it is possible, he might be apprehensive to incur ! Let us not despair ; the ministers now in power have already evinced themselves possessed



THE RIGHT HON: CHARLES LONG.

Engraved by C. Picart, from an original Drawing by H. Edridge.

of enlarged and superior minds, friendly to the arts ; and we cannot but confidently hope, that a subject of such importance may be brought forward by some patriotic adventurer, (to the Honourable Mr. Charles Long, the public stand eminently indebted, for his repeated and successful exertions in this way,) as an object for their mature deliberation, and that it will finally be determined upon in a manner at once creditable to the nation, and effectually advantageous to the cultivation of taste.

As, generally speaking, the writers who have urged such considerations have been artists, and may, therefore, however unjustly (for with very few exceptions, they will ever be found most liberal-minded men), be considered as more particularly interested ; the author ventures to inform his readers, that no such objection can be here entertained, he being fortunately in a situation which renders him altogether independent of any pecuniary advantage to be derived from a profession as honourable to the artist as it is to the community.

The sole motive which influences him on this occasion is the anxious and patriotic desire of seeing the arts, hitherto so much neglected in this great and powerful kingdom, rise to that rank and estimation, to which, under less unfavourable circumstances, there is every reason to believe they must necessarily attain.

In his very earnest endeavours to excite some degree of interest in their behalf, the writer has been unwarily led to enlarge very much beyond his original purpose ; but the subject springs from his heart, and pours unpremeditated through his pen. He set out with a view of advancing a few incidental remarks, but he has followed up the theme, till he forgot his original intention, and, on looking back, he is surprised to think how far he has wandered. He should, at the same time, consider himself deficient in candour, did he not confess that for many of the foregoing observations and valuable remarks, he stands indebted to the able and instructive writings of Mr. Shee, whose *Rhymes*, and whose *Elements of Art*, cannot be too often read, or sufficiently admired. As it is not improbable that the marks

usually adopted as indicating quotation or extract, may be accidentally omitted in the printing of his work, the author takes this opportunity distinctly to declare, that to figure in borrowed plumes is neither his intention nor desire, and that he is no way ambitious to gain credit to himself, for that which another may fairly lay claim to as his own.

As it too evidently appears, that works of this nature, notwithstanding the zeal or ability with which they may be penned, are not the manual with readers in the general class, he has been presumptuous enough to hope, that the arguments and observations borrowed from other writers, may, by coming under a new form, possibly excite curiosity afresh, and thereby attract that interest and attention which they have ceased, perhaps, so extensively to obtain. If in this supposition the writer shall prove to be under mistake, the consolation is still left to him, of feeling, in some degree, sure, that at least the attempt to awaken the public mind on a matter of such infinite importance, will hardly be considered a subject of blame.

Though he is most highly gratified to find that, since nearly the completion of his work, the subject of the fine arts has engaged, in a more particular manner, the attention of government, and that a national gallery is at length determined upon, towards the furnishing of which, the purchase of a very splendid collection of pictures has been actually made ; still he feels anxious that further steps should be taken, and that the patronage of the state be extended, as in other countries, towards our practitioners in art, and in support, especially of historical painting, which, he laments to say, bids fair to become almost unknown in this country ; the fact being notorious, that more than one of our artists, of distinguished abilities in that line, has found it necessary, from the mere want of encouragement, to abandon his pursuit, and to take up with portrait painting, as the only means by which an independence is to be obtained.

The writer cannot dismiss this subject, without noticing the unexampled liberality of our giant of an amateur, (whose works would do



G. Beaumont

honour to any professor in the world,) Sir George Beaumont, Bart., who, with a patriotism and a munificence beyond all praise, has made the voluntary offer of contributing his most valuable collection of paintings, in aid of, and by way of nucleus, to the formation of an establishment hitherto so long and so very anxiously desired.

CHAP. III.

PERFECTION IN COLOURING DIFFICULT OF ATTAINMENT. — THE ENGLISH SCHOOL SUPERIOR TO EVERY OTHER, ESPECIALLY IN THAT PART OF THE ART. — ALSO IN BOTH PAINTING AND SCULPTURE. — MISTAKE ON THIS HEAD WITH MANY OF OUR COUNTRYMEN TRAVELLING ABROAD. — CONSEQUENT NEGLECT OF PATRONAGE AT HOME. — EXHIBITION, SOMERSET HOUSE. — CANOVA. — CHANTRY. — ENGLISH SCULPTORS. — SUBJECT OF COLOURING RESUMED. — LOUTHERBOURG. — DU FRESNOY. — ANECDOTE OF A GERMAN PAINTER. — MANY PERSONS INCAPABLE OF DISTINGUISHING COLOURS. — REMARKABLE INSTANCES OF SUCH DEFICIENCY. — EXAMPLE IN WHICH THE FACULTY IS POSSESSED IN AN EXTRAORDINARY DEGREE. — A CHARACTER BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. — EXCELLENCE OF HIS LITERARY COMPOSITIONS.

IN treating upon the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, it was remarked how very difficult a task it has ever been found to copy, or even to come near to, the exquisite beauty of his colouring ; so true, indeed, is this, that it becomes sufficient almost to deter any one who is possessed of the power of distinguishing and appreciating its excellence, from making even the attempt. The observation applies in nearly an equal degree to the colouring of Wilson also ; for excepting, perhaps now and then, in the pictures of Turner, Calcott, and others of our own artists, how very rarely do we see any thing that can come at all into competition with it.

That such is actually the case, no one who has practised or is conversant with the art, and fully acquainted at the same time with the skill and the knowledge required in its process, can do otherwise than fairly acknowledge.

When we consider, therefore, that the very same kind of materials which Sir Joshua and Wilson are known to have used are to be had every day, and that these artists made no secret of their method in using them, one cannot help not only suspecting, but we must naturally be led to conclude, that something more than mere correctness of eye is required, in order to judge of the nice discri-

mination of colours, and that the difficulty here spoken of does not arise so much from any deficiency in the sense of seeing, as from some incapacity in the intellect of the artist. This observation is in conformity with what was hinted at before, when speaking of the faculty of judging of the relation and harmony of colours in general, and which, like a fine ear for music, has always appeared to the writer to be no other than an intellectual gift of nature, the absence of which no practice or observation can ever supply; insomuch as such endowment depends more on the peculiar faculties of the mind than the organ of sense, and without which it is not possible so much as even to discover, much less to copy, the exquisite beauties and intricacies of fine colouring.

And such appear to have been the sentiments of Richardson, when he informs the student, that “ he who would be a good colourist himself, must practise much after, and for a considerable time accustom himself to see, well coloured pictures only; but even this will be in vain, unless he have a good eye, in the sense as one is said to have a good ear for music; he must not only see well, but have a particular delicacy with relation to the beauty of colours, and the infinite variety of tints.”*

The observations, indeed, which the author has himself been able to make during the course of a considerable number of years, have been quite sufficient to convince him of the extreme difficulty of attaining to excellence in this part of the art, and to incline him to be strongly of opinion that the perfection of that power of perception, whereby we distinguish colours, is a faculty of much more rare occurrence than that which manifests itself by the assistance of the ear.

When one reflects upon the prodigious multitude of painters in the many different schools on the Continent, together with those of our own country, who have followed the art of painting during any given period, take for instance the last fifty years, and when it is

* Richardson's Theory.

considered how very few, out of that immense number, have attained any real perfection ; we must naturally be led to conclude, and it cannot but be observable even to those unacquainted with its difficulties, that to arrive at excellence, in any one branch of it, is an object of no easy attainment, let a man be gifted with powers ever so great, or let his exertions and perseverance be ever so strenuous and unremitted.

Among the vast concourse of painters, whose practice on so many occasions has been attended to by the author, more particularly in the galleries of Dresden and Vienna, in the first of which, especially, may be continually seen great numbers from all parts of the world, and in which he himself studied for many weeks, or rather months at a time ; as well as in those of Munich, Dusseldorf, Hanover, Berlin, Florence, and the Louvre, not to mention the students in the art in our own country ; it has always very forcibly struck him, that the want of this delicate feeling for, and nice discrimination of, colours, was more observable than the absence of any other quality.

In most of the other parts of painting, viz. of composition, of drawing, *claro-oscuro*, &c. where even natural ability be wanting, the deficiency is, not unfrequently, made up, in a certain degree, by assistance derived from either downright plagiarism, or the study of the works of such masters as have excelled in any particular branch of the art ; and many a tolerable picture has thus been produced, unexceptionable, perhaps, in each of these several respects ; but in the article of colour, the difficulty of attaining to excellence becomes almost as great in making a copy, as it does in the attempt to paint an original picture, the requisite “ eye for colour ” being the same in both cases, as well for distinguishing it in the original, as for producing it in the copy, and for which no equivalent or substitute can possibly be found.

So convinced indeed is the writer of this, and the rarity of the requisite endowment, that he has little doubt, were it possible for the experiment to be tried, that if the several degrees of merit of



each particular picture, (such, only, it is meant, as could boast of any tolerable pretensions to excellence,) out of the whole mass produced in the different schools of Europe during any given period, could be arranged according to some such method as that adopted by Mons. De Piles; that is, in “a kind of balance, in which, on one side, is set down the painter’s name, and the most essential parts of his art, in the degree he possessed them, and on the other side their proper weight of merit, so as by collecting all the parts as they appear in each painter’s works, one might be able to judge how much the whole weighs *;” if in pursuance of such a plan we were to form a catalogue, divided into columns, assigning to each particular picture the precise degree of perfection which it contained in the several parts of the art, viz. composition, design, colouring, drawing, &c.; if after such a catalogue was properly arranged and filled up, we were to add together the several items in each of these columns, there can be little reason for hesitation in believing, that the one assigned to the department of colouring would turn out to be by much the most deficient of them all, after the sum total had been found.

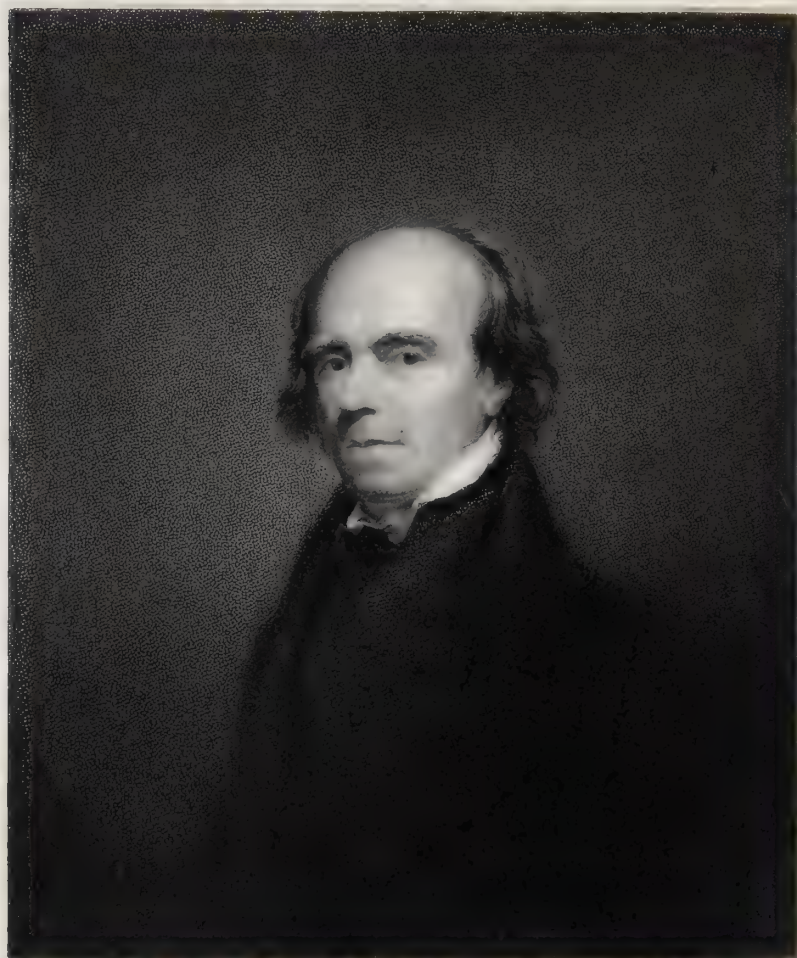
Supposing, however, for a moment, that it might be practicable for an aggregate of this nature to be obtained, the writer does not scruple to give it as his very decided opinion, that of the many excellencies which distinguish the British school above those of every other country, taken in a body, (for there are many individuals, it cannot be doubted, of deservedly high reputation and abilities in most of them,) in no one part of the art will the superiority of our countrymen be more obviously conspicuous than in that under consideration.

In making the above assertion, the writer is not aware of being influenced by one single grain of partiality, however anxious he most undoubtedly is for the reputation and the honour of the English school. Respecting the truth of what is maintained concerning our

* De Piles’s Principles of Painting.

own artists, as compared with those at least of Italy, France, and the whole German empire, at the present day, he can bear testimony, having carefully examined the works of most of their professors. As to any others, that is to say, what the countries of the north, beyond Prussia, may be able to produce, he cannot venture, on equally certain grounds, to make a similar assertion respecting them, not having visited those countries ; no one specimen, however, that he has witnessed, has at all given him reason for believing that they may not, without any injustice whatever, be ranked rather in a subordinate, than in a superior class.

That there are most able artists on the Continent, it would be perfectly unfair to deny ; and in many departments of the art, more especially in accuracy of outline and academical knowledge of the figure, not a few who greatly excel. Generally speaking, however, there cannot be a doubt of the superiority of our own, not only in the department of colouring, but in painting altogether ; and, I will add, in sculpture also, notwithstanding that many of our countrymen, unaccustomed perhaps to the consideration of such matters, are often led, during a temporary residence on the Continent, to suppose the reverse, and not unfrequently to imbibe the mistaken opinion, that out of Italy nothing of real excellence, in the way of sculpture, can possibly be obtained. Under this erroneous impression it is, that large sums are frequently expended by Englishmen upon foreign sculptors and painters abroad, which might have been so much more patriotically employed in the encouragement of our own artists at home ; and not unfrequently with the additional advantage of possessing a production of far superior excellence into the bargain. I know myself, from actual experience, that this is continually the case, and that numbers of our young men of fortune, who previously to their having crossed the channel, never once concerned themselves about the fine arts, or any thing relating to them, having most likely devoted their time and attention to other pursuits, and more particularly, perhaps, to those inviting amusements, so eagerly pursued, of hunting and other sports of the field ; amusements which, it must



GEORGE HENRY LEBRON



James O. Thompson

1870

be allowed, are at once the most manly, healthful, and beneficial in every point of view, inasmuch, as they very greatly tend to induce country gentlemen to reside upon their estates, and, consequently, to spend their incomes at home; I have witnessed, I observe, many instances of such persons, and am hearing almost every day of still more, who, the moment they get to Rome, where the arts and matters connected with them form the only objects of interest or concern in the place, immediately begin to turn their attention to paintings and statues, and objects of *virtù*, feeling, no doubt, according to the well known proverb, that “at Rome one must do as they do at Rome;” and as the acquisition of knowledge in such an interesting occupation cannot fail, very naturally, to induce the desire with those possessing the means, of procuring to themselves what is capable of affording so much enjoyment, these gentlemen do not hesitate to give commissions to foreign sculptors, and to send home statues, no way better than, and oftentimes very inferior to, our own.

As a proof how much misled in this particular some of our young men of fortune are, the author will just mention, that only a very few years ago a friend of his, in a letter from Florence, filled with expressions of rapture and delight at every thing he beheld, very deliberately assured him that he had not the smallest hesitation in declaring that the Venus de Medicis was, in his opinion, much inferior to that of her rival by Canova! *Credat Judæus!*

Without, however, detracting from the merits of foreign artists, and of the last-mentioned sculptor in particular, who must, unquestionably, be ranked among the very first in his profession, still I am bold enough to contend, that works have been produced from the chisels of our own Nollekins, our Flaxman, our Chantry, Westmacott, and others, which will be found in no degree to suffer by a comparison with those of the Italian. This was indeed sufficiently evident some few years ago, when the works of Canova were exhibited at Somerset House. The writer well remembers that exhibition, and has little hesitation in giving it as his opinion, that the

group of Chantry, now in Litchfield cathedral, was equal to the Hebe, and greatly superior to the Terpsichore of the Italian. Mr. Bailey's statue of Eve, exhibited last spring at the British Institution, would do honour to any collection. Is it not, then, mortifying in the highest degree, to see that source of encouragement, which might have so powerful an effect towards the advancement of art in England, bestowed by Englishmen upon foreign artists abroad? Did but such considerations occur to our liberal-minded countrymen, very different, I am confident, would be the result. But unfortunately so it is, and so it always will be, I fear, that any article not made *at home*, and consequently more difficult to be obtained, never ceases to carry with it an attraction which our own products, let them be ever so faultless or excellent, are very rarely found to possess. This holds not only in regard to our paintings and our statues, but likewise in almost every thing else, as many of our manufacturers can testify.

No one thing, in fact, is wanting but encouragement and patronage, to enable our own country to excel, in a much greater degree than she even now does, every other in the arts of design; as is already the case with those of an inferior kind, in which less of the intellectual is required, notwithstanding the advantages which the first mentioned have hitherto enjoyed have been comparatively few.

In one of the discourses delivered to the Royal Academy by the late President, Mr. West, the following observations were made, viz. "Knowing, as we do, the movement of the arts on the Continent, I may confidently say, that our annual exhibitions, both as to number and taste, engrafted on nature, and the fruit of mental conception, are such, that all the combined efforts in art on the Continent of Europe, in the same time, have not been able to equal.

"Were those in power but to bestow the crumbs from the national table to cherish the fine arts, we might pledge ourselves that the genius of Britain would, in a few years, dispute the prize with the proudest periods of Grecian or Italian art."*

* Galt's Life of West.





But to return to the subject under consideration. There is a circumstance which has very frequently excited the author's surprise, and respecting an explanation of which he has never until lately been able to form any probable conjecture; and that is, that a painter shall seem to be alive to all the beauties of fine colouring; shall be enthusiastic in his praise of their delicacy, harmony, and admirable effects; and that this same painter, even though he be a man of extensive practice, shall, when he comes to take paint and pencils in hand, exhibit upon his canvass tints so very far removed in quality and appearance from any thing of the kind; this appears, indeed, an unaccountable contradiction. And yet it may be continually observed, the artist on such occasions having been, perhaps, all the while totally unconscious that he had not succeeded to the full; and if it may have been a copy that he has aimed at, appearing to be most thoroughly satisfied in his own mind that his imitation was no way different in either the mellowness, the brilliancy, or the purity of colour from that which the original picture might possess; and all this, at the same time, very possibly, without his being in the least degree wanting either in that modesty or diffidence of himself, which is the never-failing concomitant of superior genius and greatness of mind.

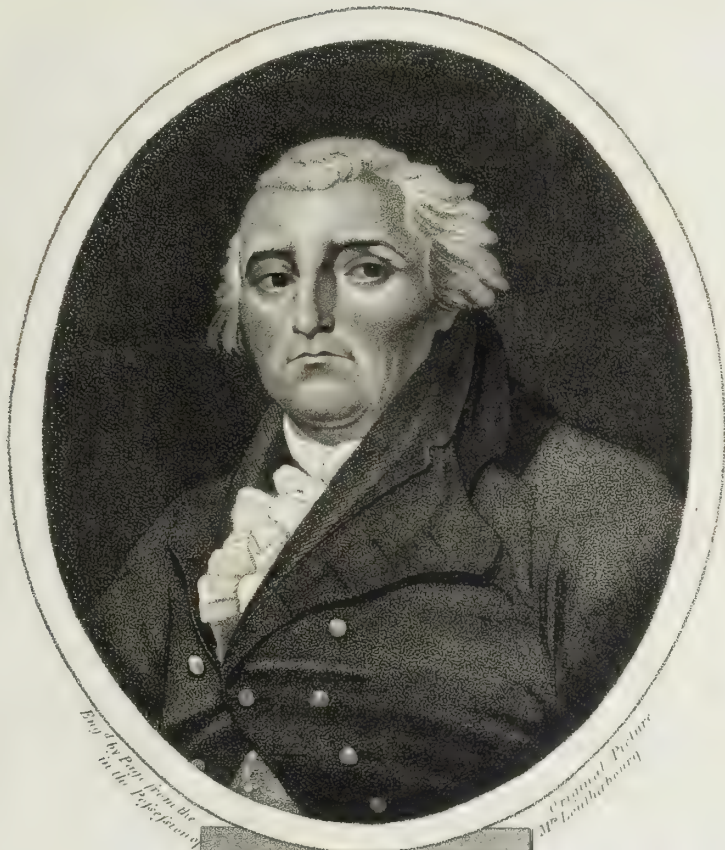
Let it not be supposed that, in stating the above circumstances, allowance is omitted to be made for the full effects of that disposition so universally felt, in a certain degree by all, which naturally inclines even those who are most suspicious of themselves to overlook, or, rather, for such doubtless is the case, to be absolutely blind to faults and imperfections in any thing which they themselves have produced; or, at the same time, that the writer is otherwise than perfectly aware of the unavoidable difference which is ever discoverable between a picture newly painted and one of older date. Such considerations have little to do with the glaring discrepancies alluded to, as those persons very well know who are acquainted with the practice of the art. And yet these men have eyes, and are not without judgment and understanding, and the power of reflection, and might, it should

reasonably be thought, from long practice and observation, have been less liable to deception in this particular; especially, as many such artists are capable of displaying much talent, and great knowledge in their management of other branches of the art.

When such matters are duly considered, it is impossible not to be struck with the difficulty of attaining to excellence in this particular department of colour, and it can be no matter of surprise that it is so seldom exhibited in any degree approaching to that perfection in which it is to be found in some of the old masters; who, as compared with the almost innumerable multitude of practitioners, their predecessors, contemporaries, and successors, may, indeed, well be denominated "*the chosen few*."

Many painters there are, and often very excellent ones, in other respects, who go on through their whole career, without ever becoming undeceived on this head. I have not only witnessed many instances of this myself, while occasionally looking at the practice of different artists, but have been, moreover, well acquainted with numbers whose want of discernment in the particular here spoken of has been strikingly conspicuous. Were I indeed inclined, I could very readily mention more than one among those of our own school, who have been painting all their lives, and during no very short ones either, and talking all along of the beauties and excellence of colouring, and yet have not advanced one step nearer the mark than when they first set out.

Without intending the least disrespect to the memory or reputation of an artist deservedly admired, and who, in execution, was scarcely ever surpassed, it may be mentioned, that in the latter works, especially, of Louthembourg, I never could reconcile myself to the very glaring and oftentimes unharmonious tints which his pictures displayed; the very bright yellows and reds, opposed frequently to the most powerful purples and blues, besides many other gaudy, crude, and violent oppositions, always struck me as very extraordinary and unaccountable in an artist of so much practice and experience, and who, in many respects, was certainly a delightful



*Eng. by Poir from the
in the original picture*

*Original Picture
Mrs. Lottherbourg*



LOTTERBOURG.

London Published as the Act directs 1804 by G. Jones



painter. Such a circumstance, however, is by no means uncommon, examples of which may continually be seen in our present exhibitions, and those, not unfrequently, the productions of our most eminent artists.

To what possible cause are we to attribute this seeming incongruity, or what reasons shall we assign for a deficiency so frequently to be met with in men of intellect, observation, and extensive practice ; in a pursuit too, upon which the whole bent and power of their minds have been continually and incessantly employed ? Not surely to any defect in the sense of vision, but rather, I conceive, to a deficiency in the mental powers ; and to the want of that peculiar faculty of the mind, by which colours are distinguished, or, to speak more technically still, to the absence of the “ organ of colour.”

Instances, however, are every now and then to be seen of an opposite nature, in which this faculty is possessed in a remarkable degree ; and when it happens that such endowment falls to the lot of the practitioner in the art, its advantageous effects become presently seen, as the works of some of our own painters sufficiently testify. Let it not, however, be imagined that, because the author has dwelt so much upon the subject of this particular part of painting, he would depreciate the other excellencies of the art, or that, to be a painter, he means to insinuate the absolute necessity of possessing it, in a supereminent degree. Most assuredly he is far from entertaining such an idea, being very well aware that, in the enumeration of the different parts of the art, colouring does not rank as the foremost ; still it cannot but be granted, that excellence therein, when we do chance to meet with it, has something so almost indescribably attractive and magical belonging to it, as to make up, in a great degree, for the absence of many other requisites ; provided always that the performance in which it is found is not directly hostile to, and at variance with, either the acknowledged principles of science, on the one hand, or a moderate degree of execution and good taste on the other.

And such, indeed, seem to be the sentiments of Fresnoy, when, in allusion to the uses and effects of colouring when properly applied, that is, in assistance, and not to the exclusion of other excellencies, he not improperly calls it “the handmaid of her sister Design, for whom she procures lovers by dressing, painting, ornamenting, and making her appear more bewitching than she naturally is ; and thus, as Dryden observes in his parallel betwixt poetry and painting, it is the versification, tropes, figures, and other elegancies of language and expression, *the colouring of poetry*, that charm the reader and beautify the fable or design ; but, in both arts, if the latter be mean or vicious, the cost of language and colouring will be wholly thrown away, like a rich habit, jewels, and other finery, on an ordinary woman, which, instead of rendering her charming, only tend to illuminate and draw her defects more strongly into notice, making what was in itself bad, appear ten times worse by comparison.” *

Though the writer believes the power of distinguishing colours incapable of being taught, or even acquired by any one to whom nature has denied the particular faculty, he wishes it by no means to be understood, that he is otherwise of opinion than that it may be very greatly enlarged and refined by an acquaintance with the best specimens of art ; or that study and observation, assisted by a knowledge of the theory of colours, are not capable of extending the sphere of activity to which its manifestations belong. For, like every other perception of the mind, it is open to a high degree of cultivation ; and it has been well observed by a writer of eminence, that “of the various powers and faculties we possess, there are some which nature seems to have planted and reared so as to have left nothing to human industry. Such are the powers which we have in common with the brutes, and which are necessary to the preservation of the individual or the continuance of the kind. There are other powers of which nature hath only planted the seeds in our

* Opie's Lectures.



JOHN DRYDEN.

*For the 1st copy
of the 1st edition*

minds, but hath left the rearing of them to human culture. It is by the proper culture of these that we are capable of all those improvements in intellectuals, in taste, and in morals, which exalt and dignify human nature; while, on the other hand, the neglect or perversion of them makes it degeneracy and corruption.”*

As the subject is interesting, and as it may possibly be thought that the opinion entertained has been taken up upon light grounds, or without due consideration, the writer proposes to enter a little more fully into the investigation of its truth; being not without a hope, that by the aid of certain facts and examples which have fallen within his own immediate knowledge and observation, he will not be thought to have entered upon a wild speculation only, but that some of his readers may, on the contrary, be induced to think the matter worthy of further consideration, and perhaps of more extensive enquiry also. For, assuredly, there cannot be a research productive of more rational amusement, or of greater moment, than that which tends, even in the remotest degree, to throw light upon any thing relating to the faculties and the qualifications of our own minds.

It has been remarked, that in the course of his observations among the practitioners in the art, more particularly while studying in different galleries on the Continent, the author had not unfrequently met with remarkable instances of deficiency in the faculty of distinguishing colours; some of these have, indeed, been curious enough. As it may, perhaps, afford a degree of variety to the subject, he will relate an occurrence of the kind, which came to his knowledge not by hearsay only, but was actually presented to his own immediate observation, and with which, he conceives, the reader can hardly fail to be somewhat amused.

Having had at all times a strong predilection for painting, the writer formed the determination, upon his first arrival on the Continent, of putting himself under the tuition of some able artist, for

* Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind.

the purpose of obtaining instruction in the mechanical part of painting in oil. After having, therefore, made the requisite enquiry, he engaged with a gentleman who was considered among the most able and distinguished landscape painters of the day, in one of the principal cities in Germany.

Though the works of the painter alluded to would not, perhaps, have obtained any very considerable notice in this country, they were, nevertheless, most highly esteemed in Germany, and throughout the northern parts of Europe, and excited a very considerable eagerness in many persons of rank and fortune to possess them. Whatever degree of merit, however, the productions of this painter might possess, he certainly had imbibed a truly sincere love for his art, the very arduous pursuit of which seemed to form by far the most material object in his existence. Though this artist was by no means insensible to the merits of the great masters whose productions he never ceased to extol, he was nevertheless decidedly of opinion that it was from nature alone, after the first rudiments had been learned, that any thing valuable could be ever obtained. The research, therefore, into the beauties of nature was his continual theme, (*nach Natur, nach Natur* *, he would often repeat,) and so indefatigable was he in his study and observation that he was in the habit of frequently spending whole days together out of doors, in his anxious endeavours to obtain a thorough knowledge of the intricacies and combinations belonging to the different materials of which landscape is composed. There was, however, one thing about which, above all other considerations, he appeared more particularly solicitous, and that was his very great desire to hit upon the true way of giving in his pictures that rich, glowing, and harmonious appearance which is presented in the sky, when illumined by the splendours of the rising or the setting sun; having taken it very strongly into his head that all the great painters in landscape, not excepting Claude himself, of whom more particularly he expressed

* After Nature, after Nature.

himself as being a most enthusiastic admirer, had proceeded upon entirely wrong principles, and had, consequently, as might very naturally be expected, altogether failed in their attempts to produce the desired effect.

The manner in which the sun had been represented in their pictures, had, according to this artist's way of thinking, been quite defective, and produced under a perfectly mistaken idea; for, observed he, very gravely, instead of exhibiting the disk of that luminary as a *light*-coloured object, which they invariably had, he was clearly of opinion that it ought to be painted *dark*, the absolute truth of which he conceived himself to have ascertained beyond the shadow of a doubt, having repeatedly verified the fact by his own ocular observation during the course of numberless experiments.

Though I did my best to enter into the nature of my instructor's mode of reasoning, making at the same time, according to his directions, many very painful experiments, in order, if possible, to succeed, and in the practising of which I at several different times nearly half blinded myself, so insufferable to my naked eyes were the dazzling rays of the sun; still, in spite of all my endeavours, I was never once able to see the thing in a similar light with himself. The fact seemed to be, that this worthy enthusiast, under the erroneous impression which he had imbibed, had been so long in the habit of gazing, with his eyes wide open, at the blazing orb of day, and had so repeatedly all but extinguished them, they being of a conformation essentially different in every respect from those with which the bird of Jove is supplied, that at length, as may be naturally supposed, the zealous observer could literally perceive nothing at all; that flickering indistinctness excepted which ever accompanies the unprotected exposure of the organs of sight to the painful and intolerable blaze of a cloudless sun.

Upon again visiting this good man, about a twelvemonth or so afterwards, I was quite pleased to find him perfectly elate, and in the highest spirits imaginable, he having at length succeeded, as he exultingly informed me, in discovering the grand desideratum, the object of all his labour and research. After shaking me very cordially

by the hand, he, without any further ceremony, led me into his painting room: "There," said he, as we entered, "look there, I have got it at last; now you may see exactly how the sun should be painted; there's Nature herself." Upon casting my eye towards his easel, I observed a landscape of considerable dimensions, in a state of much forwardness, containing a large expanse of sky, glowing, for the most part, with all the blended hues which the mixture of red, yellow, and white is capable of producing; in the very midst and most conspicuous part of which might be seen a little, round, darkish grey spot, about the size of a threepenny silver piece, and which I evidently perceived he intended for nothing more or less than the *shining* sun. The effect produced by this curious display was, as may be easily imagined, ludicrous in the highest degree. One might, indeed, fairly say of it with the poet,

"Qui color albus erat, nunc est contrarius albo." *

OVID.

As the author would be most extremely sorry to wound, in the very remotest degree, the feelings of any one connected with the individual alluded to, who is now, it is to be feared, alike insensible to censure and to praise, he will refrain from mentioning either his name or place of abode. He was, indeed, to all appearance, a very worthy character, and the writer has the greatest reason for remembering, with sentiments of obligation and regard, his kind attention, and the great solicitude with which at all times he explained, in the most liberal and undisguised manner, the nature and mysteries of his art, in which he had several secrets of his discovering, and such as were, at least in his own estimation, singularly valuable and profound.

At the time I became acquainted with this artist, he must have been very considerably above fifty years of age, and had been engaged in the study of painting during the greater part of his life; there could be little hopes, therefore, of his ever arriving at any great degree of perfection in that part of the art at present more

* "What was formerly white is now directly the reverse."

particularly under consideration ; for, however piercing his eye might have been in other respects, we certainly must not reckon an “ eye for colour” among the number of his endowments.

“ Many persons who see as clearly and distinctly as others, cannot judge of colours, and do not enjoy their harmonious mixtures and arrangement *,” says a writer of extensive observation and enquiry.

That this is the fact, there cannot be a question, and many remarkable instances are not wanting to establish the truth of it beyond all manner of doubt. As, however, general assertions amount to nothing like proof ; and as the author has it in his power to produce them, he will lay before the reader an account of two different instances that have come to his knowledge, of persons who were well known to have exhibited, in a very extraordinary degree, a deficiency in the faculty in question.

A gentleman of the first respectability in the county of Lincoln, well educated and quite a man of the world, was so extremely devoid of this faculty of distinguishing colours, “ that he did not know pea-green from pink, or brown from green. I remember,” says the person who furnishes this information, “ my father once looking at a pale-green work-box, and asking if it were not raspberry-and-cream colour.” The words quoted are those used by this gentleman’s own daughter, in a letter to the author.

Notwithstanding the deficiency observable in the above-mentioned gentleman, he was in other respects a remarkably intelligent man, possessing many endowments of mind, in a far higher degree than is generally to be met with in other people. The peculiar faculty, for instance, for which he was so much distinguished in the neighbourhood in which he resided, of judging on all occasions with singular accuracy respecting *form*, was the theme of admiration among all his acquaintance ; there having been scarcely any person in the whole country round who was considered so good a judge of either a horse, a cow, a sheep, or a hound, or indeed of any animal

* Illustrations of Phrenology, by Sir G. S. Mackenzie, Bart.

whatever, not excepting the “human form divine,” in as far as just symmetry and proportion were concerned, as himself, although the art of drawing had in no particular degree been the object either of his study or attention.

Thus, it appears, that a deficiency in one particular faculty is no proof of intellectual deficiency in general; and experience every day proves, that some persons excel in one power of the mind, and others in another; some may be defective, as in the above-mentioned example in one particular, and, nevertheless, at the same time possess an extraordinary capacity in another; a clear proof this, that the faculties are not single but compound, and that, contrary to former systems of the philosophy of the mind, there is not one imagination, one judgment, one memory, but many.

The other instance of a similar kind is derived from authority equally undoubted, the gentleman to whom it relates having been also a resident in the extensive county of Lincoln.

Among many well authenticated instances of this person's defect in the faculty of distinguishing colours, it may be sufficient to mention the following; viz. “Mr. ——— fancied that the person who was going to marry his daughter did not pay her proper respect in coming to the wedding in a black coat, when, at the same time, the coat which he had on was either blue or green, though I don't perfectly remember which.” The above are again the words of the writer from whom the information has been obtained.

Many instances of a similar kind might be easily produced; to those, indeed, who occupy themselves in such researches, examples of a like nature must be sufficiently familiar. The foregoing, however, will suffice to show, that the deficiency here spoken of is by no means uncommon.

The author will now bring forward a case of a different kind, in which the very reverse of what has been stated is exemplified. This he is the better enabled to do, as there happens to be within his own immediate knowledge a person possessing the distinct power of perception in question, in a degree far exceeding any thing of the

kind that he ever witnessed before, and concerning which such very frequent opportunities have been afforded for observation, as could only under similar circumstances have possibly occurred, at least in an equal degree; the highly gifted individual to whom he alludes having been for a great many years in the number of his very intimate associates, and almost continually at hand.

Although he has never ceased to admire, and not unfrequently to take advantage, in his humble way of painting, of this very singular aptitude, not only to perceive, but to remember and to judge of the relation and the harmony of colours, he has never been able until lately to account, in any satisfactory way, for a sensibility as striking as it is unusual; and which has always appeared, very evidently, to him, totally distinct from any thing like an acquired one. It was, indeed, only very recently, upon his attention having been directed to the new system of enquiry concerning the nature and manifestations of the human mind, that the mystery appeared, at least to his own apprehension, in some degree explained.

The readiness with which this lady would at all times spontaneously, and without apparently even a thought, at once decide in a manner the most correct and judicious, upon the fitness or propriety of such or such an arrangement of colours, (in any thing relating either to a picture, the furniture of a room, or the different articles of dress,) has often struck him as truly remarkable, when at the very same moment, perhaps, he has known others, who, although assisted by mature deliberation, and the advantage of having considered the matter in every possible point of view, have at last been obliged to acknowledge themselves incapable of making up their minds as to which assortment or combination would be best suited for the purpose required.

This individual having been presented as a striking example of the existence of that particular faculty under consideration, the writer cannot resist the opportunity afforded him of paying his tribute of regard to one, whom he has so long known with increasing admiration and esteem,—one, in fine, whose love of nature and the arts,

in the practice of which she eminently excels, is as sincere and ardent as his own, and respecting the truth of which he may, in the language of the poet, very fairly appeal to herself: —

“ And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
Fast lock'd in mine, with pleasure such as love,
Confirm'd by long experience of thy worth
And well tried virtues, could alone inspire —
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.
Thou know'st my praise of nature most sincere,
And that my raptures are not conjured up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.”

COWPER.

Amongst the miscellaneous writings of Sir Joshua Reynolds, to the consideration of whose works the author never fails to turn with peculiar satisfaction, is a character that bears so striking a resemblance to the lady in question, and affords so excellent an example of that artist's powers in the use of the pen, of which some persons have been disposed, very erroneously, to entertain doubts, that the author is tempted to produce it in proof of the President's ability in that method of delineation, and in which, it must certainly be granted, he very greatly excelled, no less than in the more difficult one by which he was so supereminently distinguished. “ *Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit.*” *

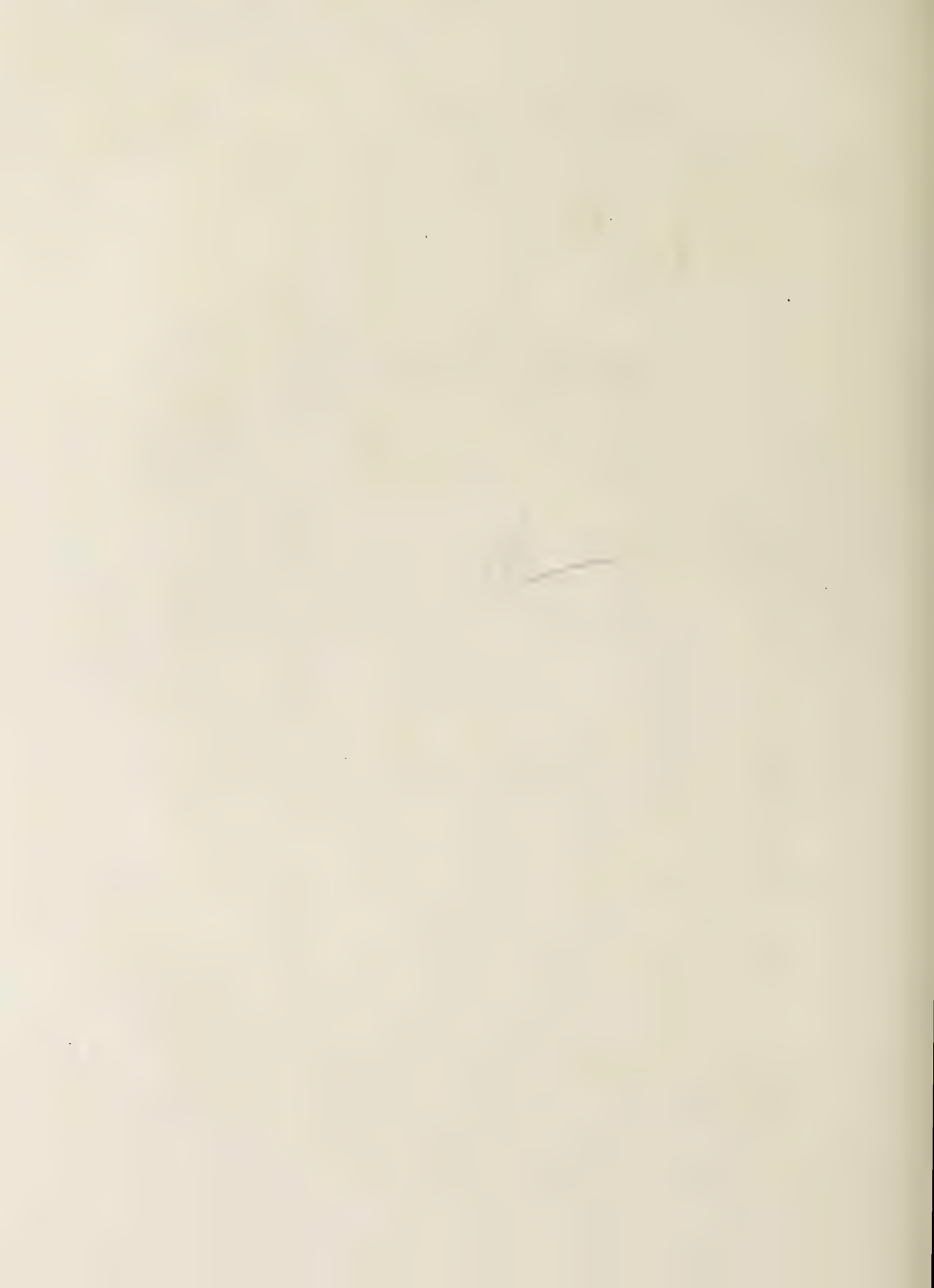
CHARACTER OF THE HONOURABLE MRS. P——, BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS,
DECEMBER 21. 1775.

“ Her amiable disposition, her softness and gentleness of manners, endeared her to every one that had the happiness of knowing her ; her whole pleasure and ambition were centered in a consciousness of properly discharging all the duties of a wife, a mother, and a sister ; and she neither sought for nor expected fame out of her own house. As she made no ostentation of her virtues, she excited no envy ; but

* “ He took nothing in hand that he did not adorn.”



WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.



if there had existed so depraved a being, as to wish to wound so fair a character, the most artful malignity must have searched in vain for a weak part. Her virtues were uniform, quiet, and habitual; they were not occasionally put on; she wore them continually; they seemed to grow to her, and be a part of herself; and it seemed to be impossible for her to lay them aside, or to be other than what she was. Her person was eminently beautiful; but the expression of her countenance was far above all beauty that proceeds from regularity of features only. The gentleness and benevolence of her disposition were so naturally impressed on every look and motion, that without any affected effort or assumed courtesy, she was sure to make every one her friend that had ever spoken to her or even seen her.

“In so exalted a character it is scarce worth mentioning her skill and exact judgment in the polite arts; she seemed to possess, by a kind of intuition, that propriety of taste and right thinking, which others but imperfectly acquire by long labour and application.” *

* Northcote's Life of Reynolds.

CHAP. IV.

AN EYE FOR COLOUR, AND AN EAR FOR MUSIC, DISTINCT FACULTIES OF THE MIND.—
 MANY REQUISITES FOR PRODUCING A FINE PICTURE.—TASTE, IMAGINATION, EXECUTION, JUDGMENT, MEMORY, FACULTIES EACH DIFFERING IN THEIR KIND.—ERRONEOUS OBSERVATION OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.—FORMER SYSTEMS OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE HUMAN MIND.—PLURALITY OF THE ORGANS, NO NEW IDEA.—THE SIZE OF THE BRAIN HAS A POWERFUL INFLUENCE ON THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE MIND.—NOTHING NEW IN SUCH AN IDEA.—ANTIQUE BUSTS.—PHRENOLOGY NOT A JUST SUBJECT OF RIDICULE.—NERVOUS SYSTEM.—A MISTAKE TO SUPPOSE THAT PHRENOLOGY LEADS EITHER TO MATERIALISM OR FATALISM.—FINE PICTURES CANNOT BE TOO HIGHLY ESTEEMED.—FEW PERSONS CAPABLE OF PRODUCING THEM.—OF THE QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO FORM A HISTORICAL PAINTER.—GREAT PAINTERS HIGHLY DESERVING OF OUR REGARD AND VENERATION.—LUDICROUS OCCURRENCE WHICH HAPPENED TO A PAINTER AT VIENNA.

HAVING produced examples both of perfection and deficiency in the faculty under consideration, which are sufficient to evince how very unequal nature is, in the distribution of that power of perception by which colours are distinguished, and, consequently, how little chance a painter has of succeeding in his art, who does not possess it in a certain degree; it may not be amiss to consider, a little more at large, the nature and qualities of such perception, in order to make it appear, according to what has been advanced, that the eye, though absolutely necessary as a means whereby the perception is conveyed to the brain, has far less to do with the power which enables a painter to excel, than the understanding.

And first of all, the power of distinguishing colours, as well as that which we call an “ear for music,” can be considered as no other than innate and distinct faculties of the mind, of which the eye and the ear are only the necessary instruments, respectively, whereby the perception is produced in the mind. This will appear from the following considerations:—

“Perception,” observes an intelligent and most indefatigable researcher, “belongs to *internal* faculties, and cannot be exerted

without the assistance of external instruments, which are the means provided by the Creator for establishing and keeping up a connection between the external world and our minds." It is an error to suppose that the act of perception is performed by the organ of sense; that is, that the senses, seeing, smelling, &c., act without the interposition of the brain, since without a connection with the brain, they are of no use; "it is evident, therefore, that the act of perception is not performed by them, but that their use (the senses) is to convey emanations, so to speak from the external world, as to enable them to make impressions on the brain, from which they are transmitted to the mind." *

That the powers of perception are *distinct*, and bestowed on different individuals in different degrees, no one can for a moment have a doubt, since every day's experience shows that they are;—one excels in one point, and another in another; one in judging of size, another in colour, form, &c. instances of which have been already produced; so that it is clear there must be distinct powers for perceiving different qualities.

Although the power of distinguishing colours is absolutely essential to the successful practice of the art, it by no means follows that the faculty, even in its greatest perfection, is sufficient of itself to form the painter: many, on the contrary, are the other requisites necessary to constitute a mind fitted to produce excellence in this most difficult art, and well, indeed, has it been observed, that a fine picture may be considered an absolute "miracle," so many and various are the powers required to enable the artist to produce one.

For besides the faculty of distinguishing colours, he must be gifted with the still higher intellectual power that shall enable him to mix and to apply them with the certainty of producing the effect desired. We very well know, that many persons attempt to become painters who never excel, while others fail altogether in the attempt. The particular faculty here spoken of may perceive colours, may

* Spurtzeim's System of Physiognomy.

recollect them, and may have the power of judging of their relations ; but all this is very distinct from that ability which enables a person to adapt them to the objects of painting. “ And of those who actually possess this faculty, there is a material distinction to be observed between its great activity and its perfect activity or good taste. For when this faculty is in the former state, it gives a passion for mere colour and gaudy tints, without regard to the arrangement or propriety ; whereas, it is the province of higher faculties to combine and arrange colours in a proper manner.” *

“ It is a common opinion that the art of painting is the result of sight ; and it is certainly true, that the eyes are as necessary to perceive colours, as the ears are to perceive sounds ; but the art of painting does not consist in the perception of colours, any more than music in the perception of sounds. Sight, therefore, and the faculty of painting are not at all in proportion to each other. The talent of painting cannot be measured by the acuteness of sight. Great painters never attribute their talent to their eyes : they say it is not the eye, but the understanding, which perceives the harmony of colours.” †

Thus, it is evident, that the faculty alone of distinguishing colours, so rarely to be met with in its greatest perfection, goes but a very little way, however valuable or requisite, towards forming a painter, unless it be accompanied with other essential qualifications. For without taste and judgment, and memory to aid the artist in the use of his colours, it is to little purpose that the power of distinguishing them is possessed.

Now one person may have a fine taste or imagination for one thing, and another for another. It is quite a mistake, therefore, to suppose, as a late writer has done, “ that imagination cannot be perfect unless it embrace every thing ; that a man cannot be a poet, unless he be also a painter, an architect, and so forth ; that it is

* Illustrations of Phrenology, by Sir S. G. Mackenzie, Bart.

† Spurtzeim's System of Physiognomy.





impossible that imagination can be brilliant in one department, and dull in another, in the same person, but we find it is so."

That the faculties enumerated in former systems of philosophy of mind, in the acceptation in which they are wished to be understood, are compound and not single; that there is not one imagination, one judgment, one memory, &c. but many, seems to be demonstrated by the following considerations.

No one will deny to an able architect, a fine taste or imagination for building, nor to a clever painter a fine imagination for composing a picture. But the architect may not have any taste for composing a picture, nor the painter for designing a temple. One person may have a wonderful imagination for novel-writing, and another an astonishing facility in improving grounds about country seats. But because the one could not accomplish what was easy to the other, we would not say that either of them had no imagination. One person may have a fine imagination in the composition of historical pictures, and another in the composition of music. The painter may accuse the musician of having no taste, because he cannot enjoy his picture; and the musician may, with equal justice, retort to the painter, that he has no imagination, because he does not understand music. We know that there are persons who are poets*, who cannot paint; painters who are not poets; musicians who are not architects. Now, if imagination were one single and undivided faculty of the mind, all the professions here named could never be separated; every man who had the power would necessarily be able to embrace the objects of poetry, architecture, music, painting, and a variety of other things, in a greater or a less degree. But every day's experience of others and of ourselves contradicts such a supposition. We cannot, therefore, say, according to the former idea,

* It is well known that Pope tried in vain to succeed in the art of painting: and that he both abused the professors, and contemned the art of music; as did likewise Swift, Steele, Addison, and Dr. Johnson.

that the imagination of a great poet is defective, because he cannot design a building, compose a landscape, or an overture.” *

Thus we see, that unless the artist has that particular power of imagination which is fitted for painting, his faculty for distinguishing colours, if he possess it, or his ability in the use of them, will avail him little in his attempt to arrive at excellence in his art. The more, in fact, we examine into the nature of the qualifications requisite to form a painter, the less will our surprise be excited, at finding so very few who ever attain to eminence in the profession; the greater, rather, must be our astonishment, that the world has ever been able to produce so extraordinary a phenomenon, as that individual must certainly be, who is gifted with such a rare combination of almost super-human endowments, as those which a fine painter in the higher branches of the art must necessarily possess.

For let a man have the faculty we have been considering in its highest perfection; added to which, suppose him to be possessed of a fine imagination fitted for the art; still, if he fails in execution or the power of embodying his ideas, these advantages will be found to be of very little use, for without this power, he would never be able to convince us that he possessed imagination at all.

“ A painter cannot satisfy us of his taste without a power of execution, which is distinct from the power of imagination; we determine whether his taste be good or bad by the work of his hands; and unless his work be well executed, his imagination is of no value to us.”

In addition to the above requisites, it will be seen that there are other faculties essentially necessary for a painter. For he will have imagination to little purpose, if he be without judgment to enable him to arrange what he has imagined, so that it may answer the purposes he has in view in the best manner. “ Now judgment must be of different kinds. For one person who judges vastly well of music, cannot judge of architecture; and one who judges well of

* Subjects connected with Taste, by Sir S. G. Mackensie.

architecture, may not be able to judge well of painting. In music, it sometimes happens, that a person can judge accurately of harmony but not of time ; and when he attempts to play on a musical instrument in concert he cannot keep the time. In the same manner, a person may be exceedingly alive to any trespass on time, and yet not be sensible to an encroachment on harmony. Hence it is evident, that judgment varies in kind as well as imagination. If, therefore, the painter be not gifted with that particular kind of judgment which is applicable to the art which he professes to follow, he can have little chance of success in its pursuit.

Again ; there is yet another faculty necessary for a painter, and that is memory. “ That this faculty varies in its kind, is, perhaps, more apparent than any variety in imagination or judgment. One man may have a very strong memory with respect to places where he has been, and may retain the relative position of every mountain, tree, rock, river, and lake, so as to have constantly at his command a picture of every place he has visited, which he may contemplate, or commit from his memory to the canvass. But the possession of this kind of memory does not imply that of retaining names. Without a memory for names, a landscape painter may succeed perfectly ; but he cannot become a linguist, nor a botanist, nor a mineralogist, nor pursue with success any other branch of natural history. To become a natural historian, two kinds of memory are necessary, which are not always found together ; viz. a memory for forms and a memory for names. Some persons have an extraordinary verbal memory ; that is, they remember whatever they hear, and can repeat it ; they can get by heart passages of prose and poetry with facility, while others cannot retain a line ; they take pleasure in the study of language, while others consider it dry and tiresome. Some persons have a strong memory for number, and can, without the help of setting down figures on paper, resolve very difficult questions ; while others, with every assistance, can scarcely retain the simplest rules of arithmetic. A musician requires a memory for form, to enable him to know the signs employed in music ; for place, to distinguish the po-

sition of the notes on paper, and the relative position of his finger on an instrument ; he must also have a memory for time ; and all these independent of the peculiar musical talent commonly called a good musical ear. By a little variation of terms, all this may be applied to the painter.

“ It follows from such facts, that there is an imagination and a memory belonging to each talent ; and, consequently, there must also be a distinct perception and judgment for each. If perception, imagination, memory, and judgment, were each one indivisible faculty, it would be impossible that any man could exhibit unusual perfection in one talent and be defective in every other, instances of which are frequently met with,” and of which an example, to a certain extent, has been produced in the gentleman above mentioned, who, though unable to distinguish colours, had a singular aptitude in judging of form.

“ If it be necessary that a man, to be an architect, must have imagination, it is also necessary that a man must have it to be a poet. But how comes it that the same power does not enable the architect to write poetry and the poet to build a temple ?

“ If it be necessary, in order to have any pretensions to music, that a man should be able to judge well, he who pretends to enjoy pictures must also have judgment. But how does it happen that a first-rate painter may be quite indifferent to music ; or that the most celebrated musician should hold painting in contempt ?

“ In short,” continues this acute enquirer, “ if we attend to human nature, and observe mankind, instead of shutting ourselves up and presuming to measure man by ourselves, we cannot refuse to admit that every art requires a peculiar talent, to which a peculiar perception, imagination, memory, and judgment belongs.” *

The observation of Sir Joshua Reynolds was perfectly just, when addressing the students in the academy he said, “ If you have great talents industry will improve them.” The concluding part of the paragraph, however, does not appear to carry with it the same de-

* Essay on Subjects connected with Taste, by Sir G. S. Mackensie.

gree of truth ; viz. " If you have but moderate abilities, industry will supply their deficiency." Nor can the author agree with what the President goes on to say in the same discourse, when he ventures to make the assertion, that " nothing is denied to well-directed labour." " Not to enter," continues he, " into metaphysical discussions on the nature or essence of genius, I will venture to assert, that assiduity, unabated by difficulty, and a disposition eagerly directed to the object of its pursuit, will produce effects similar to those which some call the result of *natural powers*." * Now the writer has little hesitation in believing that the unabated assiduity of his worthy friend, who took so much pains to arrive at perfection in painting the effects of sunshine, was as ardent, and his disposition as eagerly directed to the object of his pursuit, as they could be in any individual, and yet this painter never did, to the author's knowledge, produce, and it is much to be doubted whether he ever could have been capable of producing, any performance possessing effects similar to those alluded to by Sir Joshua, let his labour have been directed in a manner ever so eager or unremitted.

Those who have written on the philosophy of mind, before the doctrines of phrenology were promulgated, have enumerated a certain number of faculties ; and whenever any thing occurs which cannot be explained by their means, it is referred to habit or association, or to both, which are not stated as faculties ; but we are left to avail ourselves of them as we can, as auxiliary principles, and to explain their mysterious operations as we please. They are considered of no moment by those who appeal to them ; and it is rather surprising, that what is referred to as necessary to explain every anomaly, should be slurred over as not affecting the system which they are called on to support.

The human mind has hitherto been studied for the most part as if it were totally unconnected with its corporeal habitation, and

* Second Discourse delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

independent of it; and philosophers have, all along, either been blind to the numerous proofs with which daily experience furnishes us, of the close and intimate connection between mind and matter, or have turned from the consideration of a connection for which they found it difficult to account. They have believed and asserted, that education, study, and habit, are capable of rendering every man equal to his neighbour in mental power (as in a certain degree, indeed, Sir Joshua Reynolds's assertion would seem to imply); and that diversity of talents and genius is determined solely by the degree of attention which different individuals may have bestowed on different departments of knowledge and study. Although the adage, "*Poeta nascitur, non fit*," shows clearly that men have believed that something else than education, study, or habit, was necessary to give to an individual the powers of a poet, no attention was given to a fact so notorious, nor was any attempt made to account for this, nor for many other facts in the human constitution, equally apparent and equally remarkable.

"Man," says a writer already quoted, "is a being of creation; and, therefore, the study of his nature requires the same method as the examination of every other natural being. Now, every class of living beings presents two parts for investigation; the bodily structure, which is the object of anatomy, and the functions, which are the objects of physiology."*

To enter into the subject of the mental faculties, although one of the very highest interest and importance, would be deviating into much too wide a field of enquiry for the present purpose; sufficient evidence, it is hoped, has been produced to prove, that an "eye for colour," commonly so called, does not depend upon the eye alone, but is a distinct power of the mind, not to be acquired, though very greatly to be improved by practice and observation, but is, on the contrary, an endowment of nature, and, to any degree of perfection, conferred on but a few. The writer equally refrains from offering

* Spurtzeim's System of Physiognomy.

any remarks respecting the particular indication by which the organ, upon which the manifestation of the faculty depends, is discoverable by the appearance usually presented upon the external surface of the skull, and which, as is well known to anatomists, follows invariably the form of the brain, cases of disease or old age (in as far as relates, perhaps, in the latter, to the frontal sinus alone,) excepted.

So much, however, is he inclined to this way of thinking, that he does not hesitate to give it as his opinion, that no parent ought to decide upon bringing up his son to the difficult and uncertain profession of a painter, until he has in some degree satisfied himself that such appearances are to be found belonging to the cranium of the youth, as shall make it evident, that he is not at least deficient in the indications of some of those powers so absolutely and indispensably necessary to the successful study of the art, and without which it is quite in vain to look for advancement therein ; by which are intended to be meant, more particularly, those internal organs of the manifestations of the mind, which come under the class of knowing and reflecting faculties.

To those who have yet to learn that there actually is something like reason and common sense in such opinions, expressions like these will only excite a smile, and that, not unlikely, one of contempt. Such, however, let it be observed, is no proof that the author's sentiments are unfounded or wrong.

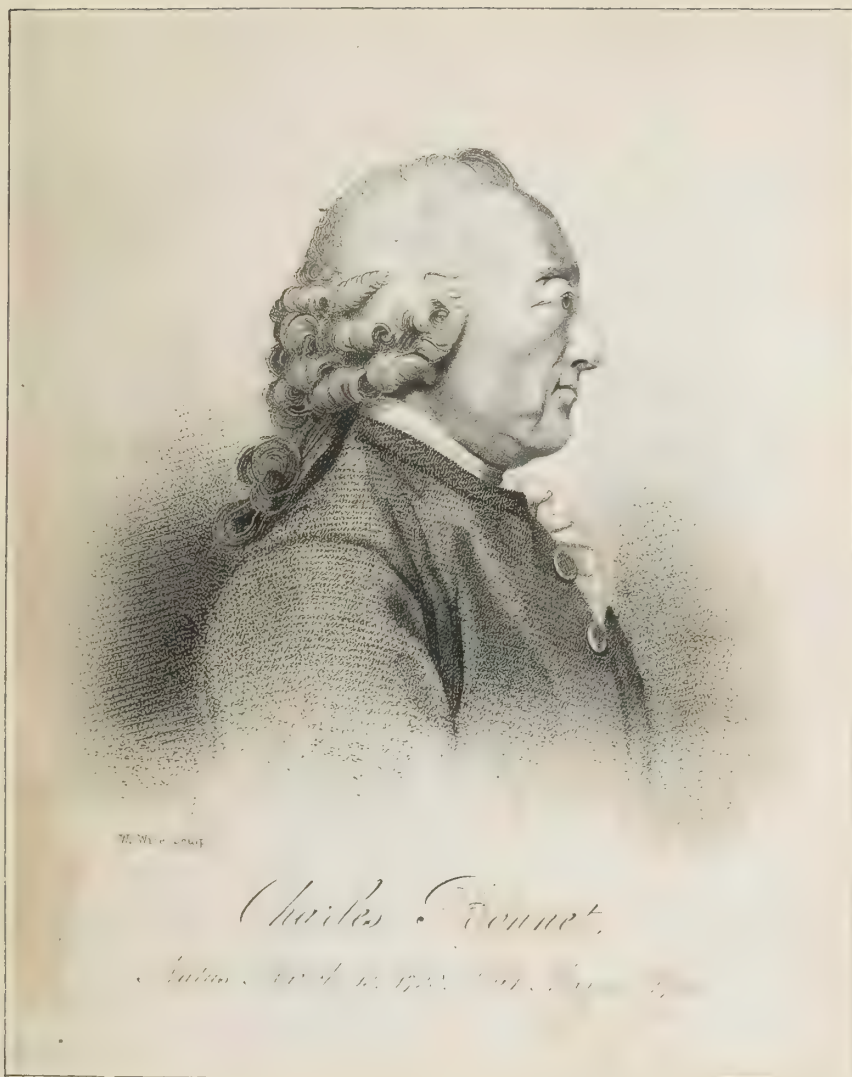
There are many persons who consider the system of phrenology as little better than a piece of quackery, and have, in consequence of such belief, been very liberal in casting ridicule and abuse upon its authors. It is a very easy matter for a person to laugh at what he does not understand ; but on what ground it can be ridiculed, it will be difficult to discover, unless, indeed, on that of our own ignorance of the constitution of man. The fact that the size of the brain has a most powerful influence on the manifestations of the mind, is so obvious, that no one not absolutely without the powers of observation and perception could possibly find it a subject of mirth. A child of a year old does not manifest mental power equal to that displayed

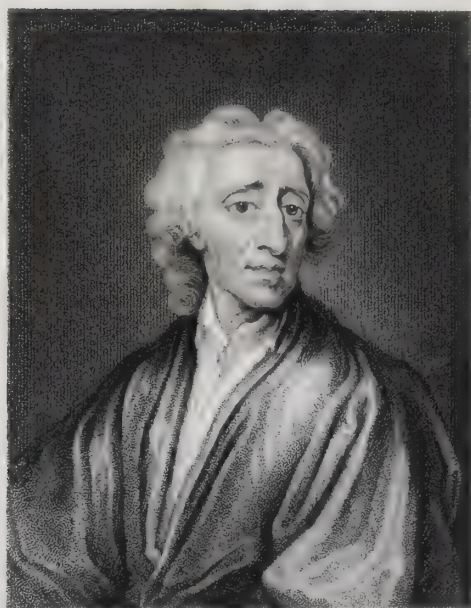
when the head arrives at its mature size. The diminutive brain of an idiot, and that of a well-formed individual of the same age, do not correspond in the intelligence respectively exhibited through their instrumentality: but what is there in this that is absurd? The influence which the condition of the brain exerts on the manifestations of mind is too apparent to be a subject of wonder. When the brain is affected by opium, alcohol, serous effusions, blows, or inflammation, the mental faculties are affected constantly in proportion to the disorder excited by these causes.

The only proposition in phrenology, the truth and notoriety of which is not equally apparent with the above facts, is, that particular parts of the brain have particular functions;—that in the same manner as we see by one pair of nerves, and hear by means of another; some possess the faculty of distinguishing colours by means of one portion of the brain, and trace effects to their causes by means of another. This proposition may be true or false; but it is difficult to perceive in what respect it is absurd.

Whether true or false, let it not be imagined that the doctrine is altogether a new one, since it is well known that the idea of the plurality of the organs is very ancient, and that those who maintain that it is an invention of Dr. Gall are mistaken. Some philosophers have called them by one name, and some by another. Malebranche speaks of principal and secondary faculties. Charles Bonnet considers each fibre of the brain as a particular organ of the soul. Boerhaave said that imagination and judgment must have different seats, because the former is active in dreaming and the latter in watching. Haller supposed that the internal senses occupy different places of the brain; an immense number, in fact, of physiologists and philosophers, admit the plurality of the organs so there is nothing which can be considered as either new or absurd in this part, at least, of the system.

As it is undeniable that a small brain, taken in the aggregate, is not equal to a large one in giving mental efficiency, and that a disordered brain is not so favourable to the manifestations of mind





John Locke

as a sound one ; it is difficult to see the objection to the proposition, that a small organ is not equal in efficacy to a large one, or that torpid organs, by means of which the intellectual faculties are manifested, are not so powerful as those in a state of healthy activity.

It is a singular fact, that while the learned resisted the important conclusion, that the brain is that part of the body on which the mind directly acts, but which is now, however, generally admitted by all anatomists and physiologists, the vulgar notions respecting the brain have always been in strict conformity with the truth. The most unlearned are in the constant habit, when speaking of a person who is stupid, of using some such phrase as, " He has no more brains than a goose,"—" Where are your brains, you numskull ?"—and it is no uncommon thing to hear such an expression as " That's a rare long-headed fellow, sure enough ;" or, " What can you expect from a poor devil with a head as round as a turnip ?" &c.

It is surely, therefore, absurd to admit the influence of size and condition in the case of the whole brain, and to find the idea of such influence affecting parts of it, ridiculous.

" I believe," observes a late writer, " that a development of the crown of the head is a certain indication of moral feelings ; that a development of the forehead indicates a reflecting mind, whilst a development of the lower part manifests a disposition to acquire knowledge ; and that a development of the whole forehead (as every one must have observed) indicates a strength of the intellectual faculties in general." *

Let any one examine the busts of antique statues, of Jupiter, for instance, or Apollo ; of Homer, of Plato, of Socrates, of sages or heroes, and he will immediately be convinced that such was the way of thinking among the ancients many centuries ago, although the science of phrenology never once entered their heads. Let him also look at those of Michael Angelo and Locke, of Bonaparte and

* Forster's Sketch.

Byron, among the moderns, and the thing becomes self-evident at once.

So far, therefore, from considering the subject with levity or ridicule, every one who will give himself the trouble to reflect seriously about it, must agree that the knowledge of man is of the deepest interest. Now the brain and the nerves cannot but be considered as the most important of the organs of man, inasmuch as the manifestations of all the faculties are more or less subordinate to the influence of the nervous system; besides which, it appears upon investigation, that not only the functions of the five senses, but all the instincts, propensities, sentiments, and intellectual faculties, all the affections and passions, all the characteristics of humanity, are manifested only by means of the nervous system.

And yet no one can deny that the greatest ignorance exists concerning this very important part of the human frame. How can then such enquiries be deemed useless and absurd? Or why, in the name of every thing that is rational or interesting, are not the faculties of the mind, and the organs upon which their manifestations depend, worthy of investigation, as well as the other parts of the creation? We examine all the beings around us; we divide and subdivide the different objects which nature presents to us; we study mineralogy, botany, zoology; why should we not study man, who manifests the greatest number of faculties, and who is lord of the terrestrial creation? Than this, indeed, it seems impossible to point out an object more interesting to natural philosophers, anatomists, physiologists, artists, teachers, moralists, and legislators. In short, the subject requires only to be regarded with a philosophic eye, to make it appear that nothing else than ignorance has directed the shafts of ridicule against the system, and not the nature and proofs of the propositions of phrenology.

The writer has been induced to dwell more at large in defence of this doctrine, from the circumstance of having himself been, until lately, an infidel respecting its truth. This arose from his being, like so many others, totally unacquainted with its nature, and the im-





portant inferences deducible from the study of it. He was not, indeed, only altogether ignorant of the principles upon which it is founded, but did actually, he does not scruple to confess, join with the multitude in ridiculing a system that, upon a superficial view only, or, perhaps, without any view of it at all, appeared to be nothing better than a wild and extravagant theory, fitted to excite little else than sentiments productive of merriment, and the jokes of the caricaturist.

It so happened that the author was at Vienna at the time that Dr. Gall gave his first course of lectures upon phrenology, five and twenty years ago; being, however, then nearly unacquainted with the German language, and having his thoughts directed to other pursuits, little attention was paid to the subject. Subsequently to that period, upon a more serious consideration of its theory and principles, together with the circumstance of his having been so fortunate as to witness the singularly ingenious and scientific dissection of the brain by Dr. Gall himself, in London, not many months ago, the question has appeared to him in a very different point of view, and his sentiments respecting it have undergone a most material and decided change.

It is, perhaps, scarcely possible to conceive any thing more curious than the wonderful phenomena exhibited in the progress of the astonishing operation alluded to; whereby, in the gradual development of the convolutions and interior parts of the brain, it became manifest, that the mass of which it is composed, instead of being a mere pulpy substance, as is generally imagined by those unacquainted with anatomy, is capable of being unfolded and extended, in a manner almost similar to a piece of cloth that has been previously puckered up and put into folds. The operator made it evidently appear to all present, that this folded cerebral substance contains a great number of divisions, forming so many compartments, and which, in his opinion, ought to be considered as the interior of the intellectual organs, the divisions indicating their respective boundaries. "Be this as it may," observes a writer no

way friendly to the system ; “ those compartments and divisions, do exist, and the brain may be unfolded in the manner described.” *

Such investigations, it must be confessed, are of a highly interesting nature, and well calculated, like every part of our “ fearfully and wonderfully” constructed machine, to inspire the most exalted sentiments of admiration towards the divine Artificer of so astonishing and complicated a frame.

In speaking of this new system of philosophy of the human mind, it has been observed, that, “ as far as we have been able to learn, not a single individual has studied the system in all its details, without becoming a convert to its doctrines ; and it has been invariably observed, that all those who have attacked the system, have been ignorant of the principles on which it is founded.” †

As phrenology has been supposed to favour materialism, and as its doctrines have in consequence been denounced as dangerous, the author ventures to say a few words upon the subject, considered in that point of view.

A writer in a periodical work published in Edinburgh, and who does not profess to be a convert to the system, thus speaks of it, viz.

“ It is a distinguishing feature of the new system, that it generates and cherishes a spirit of charity in all our judgments upon others. It places in the most striking light the defects of our nature, and the temptations to which we are exposed from our own evil propensities. And yet, as it teaches at the same time, that our higher faculties have, when duly cultivated, a governing and increasing power over the lower propensities and sentiments, it does not do away with personal responsibility. The best under this system will not be able to preserve themselves free of blame, nor will the worst escape the penalties attached to their crimes. Had its tendency been to give impunity to vice, or had it lent, when properly understood, any countenance to the doctrine of materiality, we should never have brought it under the notice of our readers.”

* Tupper's Inquiry into Dr. Gall's System, 1819.

† Sir G. S. Mackenzie's Illustrations.

Phrenologists consider materialism not as dangerous, but as unphilosophical and unimportant ; for if their doctrine be unfounded, it cannot, when viewed as the assertion of certain physical facts, logically lead to any result, except the disgrace and mortification of its supporters. “ On such a supposition it cannot overturn religion or any other *truth*, because, by the constitution of the human intellect, error constantly tends to resolve itself into nothing, and to sink into oblivion ; while truth, having a real existence, remains permanent and impregnable. In this view, then, the objection that phrenology leads to materialism is absurd. If, on the other hand, the science is held to be a *true interpretation of nature*, and it is urged that, nevertheless, it leads fairly and logically to materialism, then the folly of the objection is equally glaring ; for it resolves itself into this, that materialism is the constitution of nature, and that phrenology is dangerous, because it makes this constitution known.” *

Phrenology, in fact, shows that the question is really of no consequence whatever. “ According to the view which it gives of the human mind, the faculties are innate, and have a specific constitution. Now the faculties perform their functions according to that constitution ; that is, moral faculties give sentiments of benevolence, veneration, justice ; and reflecting faculties give understanding, precisely in the same manner, whether we believe the mind in which these faculties exist to be material or spiritual. The basis of morality is the innate power of distinguishing right from wrong, truth from error : this power is impressed upon the mind by the Creator, and is entirely independent of any speculative opinion concerning the nature or constitution of either mind or body. A materialist, when he denies a future state of existence, may be refuted by a demonstration that his premises do not warrant his conclusion, because we know nothing whatever of the essence of body or of mind, and of course are not entitled to infer, even from his own premises, that

* Phrenological Journal, No. 1.

consciousness cannot be re-established by a reunion of the same objects that are separated by death. Besides, even allowing the doctrines of materialism to be true, phrenology, by proving that man possesses moral faculties of which the lower animals are destitute, and proving that these faculties have corresponding organs, preserves man from being degraded to the level of the brutes, and shows that morality has a foundation independent of a belief of a future state of reward and punishment, although, no doubt, its exercise is greatly strengthened and promoted by that most natural and philosophical belief. Of course, the materialist, even on his own principles, is not entitled to assail the authority of our moral sentiments; and thus the danger apprehended from such opinions is altogether imaginary.” *

That the science leads, in fact, either to materialism, fatalism, immorality, or irreligion, is a belief perfectly unjust and erroneous. It will, on the contrary, be evident to those who candidly examine its doctrines, “that phrenology is entirely consistent with, and most favourable to the doctrine of the *immortality* of the soul; it leaves the question of its essence just where it was, beyond human view; — that it is perfectly consistent with the freedom of human actions; — that it tends to a very highly improved moral economy, — and that it is beautifully in harmony with the precepts of our holy faith.” †

The writer will conclude this subject by transcribing a paragraph which appeared, only a short time ago, in the newspapers of the day; it runs thus, viz.

“A few years ago, when on a visit to our friend Mr. Owen, at New Lanark, we had the pleasure to meet Mr. Combe, brought thither, like ourselves, not by the Falls of Clyde, its ancient attraction, but by the new world of men which Mr. Owen, good-naturedly and absurdly enough, is now busy in constructing among its cotton-spinners. At the request of various individuals of the party, and in particular of our hospitable entertainer, Mr. Combe agreed to make

* Sir G. S. Mackenzie.

† Phrenological Journal, No. 1.

a survey of the heads of the children attending the institution. These might amount at the time to one or two hundred ; and of the character of a great majority of them Mr. Combe did, in our presence, give a little general estimate, which the head master, who attended us, declared to be almost invariably correct.

“ This experiment, which was of the greater value, inasmuch as at New Lanark the master does not merely teach the children to read, but professes to study and train their natural dispositions, surprised us very much. It seemed ridiculous and unphilosophical to ascribe the uniformity of the result to mere casual coincidence ; and we thenceforth became prepared, scoffers as we previously had been at phrenology, to look into it with candour, if not with some little prepossession in its favour.

“ Our whole subsequent study and observation have only tended to confirm us in the belief of it ; and we have little doubt that, where it is disputed, the error proceeds more from ignorance of its true nature and pretensions than from any fairly considered judgment on its evidence. The world conceives of phrenology as an empirical pretence to discover human character from the shape of the skull, as if this congeries of bones contained the soul ; and running away with this idea, its ignorant and unprincipled enemies (the last being those who, for a laugh, will sacrifice friends, principle, truth, religion, and honour,) lavish every reproach and ridicule upon it which their wit can supply.”

When the foregoing circumstances are duly considered, and when we reflect how many and various are the qualifications essential to form a painter, in addition to the different mental faculties enumerated above, each and every one of which must be of that distinct and peculiar kind which painting requires ; and that all of them must be united in the same individual ; if, added to such considerations, we reflect on the almost numberless other requisites (many of them demanding great labour, attended with great expense, and difficult to be obtained) necessary for producing excellence, especially in the higher branch of the art, the writer will not be thought to have

over-rated the value of such works, as those of a Raphael, a Rubens, a Reynolds, or even a Wilson, and of so many other great masters, whose sublime productions must for ever excite, so long as they remain, the delight and admiration of the world.

As the qualifications alluded to may not be so obvious to those persons who have not given their attention to the subject, it may not be amiss to point out some of the most material among them, in order that the author may not be thought so extravagantly enthusiastic in his praise and estimation of fine pictures, as he might, perhaps, be otherwise considered.

“To paint a history,” observes a writer on the subject, “a man ought to have the main qualities of a good historian, and something more; he must yet go higher, and have the talents requisite to a good poet; the rules for the conduct of a picture being much the same with those to be observed in writing a poem, and painting, as well as poetry, requiring an elevation of genius beyond what pure historical narrative does; the painter must imagine his figures to think, speak, and act, as a poet should do in a tragedy or epic poem; especially, if his subject be a fable or an allegory. If a poet has, moreover, the care of the diction and versification, the painter has a task, perhaps, at least equivalent to that, after he has well conceived the thing, over and above what is merely mechanical, and other particulars; and that is the knowledge of the nature and effects of colours, lights, shadows, reflections, &c. And as his business is not to compose one *Iliad*, or one *Æneid* only, but perhaps many, he must be furnished with a vast stock of poetical as well as historical learning.

“Besides this, it is absolutely necessary to a history painter that he understand anatomy, osteology, geometry, perspective, architecture, and many other sciences, which the historian or poet has little occasion to know.

“He must, moreover, not only see, but thoroughly study the works of the most excellent masters in painting, in sculpture, ancient and modern; for though some few have gone vast lengths in the art by the strength of their own genius, without foreign assistance, these



T. Chambers sculp

S^R.PETER PAUL RUBENS.

are prodigies ; the like success is not ordinarily to be expected ; nor have even these done what probably they would have done, with the advantages the study of other mens' works would have given them.

“ A painter must not only be a poet, a historian, a mathematician, &c., he must be a mechanic ; his hand and eye must be as expert as his head is clear and lively, and well stored with science. He must not only write a history, a poem, a description, but, in a fine character, his brain, his eye, his hand, must be busied at the same time. He must not only have a nice judgment to distinguish between things resembling one another, but not the same, (which he must have in common with the noblest professions,) but, he must, moreover, have the same delicacy of eyes to judge of the tints of colours, which are of infinite variety, and to distinguish whether a line be straight or curved a little ; whether this is exactly parallel to that, or oblique, and in what degree ; how this curved line differs from that, if it differs at all, of which he must also judge ; whether what he has drawn is of the same magnitude with what he pretends to imitate, and the like ; and must have a hand exact enough to form these in his work, answerable to the ideas he has taken of them.

“ An author must think, but it is no matter how he writes ; he has no care about that ; it is sufficient if what he writes be legible : a curious mechanic's hand must be exquisite, but his thoughts are commonly pretty much at liberty ; but a painter is engaged in both respects. When a matter is well thought and digested in the mind, a work common to painters and writers, the former has still behind a vastly greater task than the other, and which to perform well would alone be a sufficient recommendation to any man who should employ a whole life in attaining it.

“ To be an accomplished painter, a man must possess more than one liberal art, which puts him upon a level with those who do that, and make him superior to those who possess but one in an equal degree ; he must be, also, a curious artificer, whereby he becomes superior to one who equally possesses the other talents, but wants

that. A Raffaele, therefore, is not only equal, but superior to a Virgil or a Livy, a Thucydides or a Homer.

“What I now advance,” continues this enthusiastic writer, “may appear chimerical ; in that case I only desire it may be considered whether it is not a necessary consequence of what went before, and was and must be granted.” *

“Let it be always understood,” observes another justly esteemed writer and artist, “that the end of painting, in its highest style, is twofold ; first, the giving effect, illusion, or the true appearance of objects to the eye ; and, secondly, the combination of this with the ideal, or the conception of them in their utmost perfection, and under such an arrangement as is calculated to make the greatest possible impression on the spectator.

“With such purposes in view, consisting of such a multitude of parts, and requiring such an uncommon assemblage of powers, mechanical and mental, of hand, of eye, of knowledge, of judgment, of imagination, and of indefatigable perseverance in study and practice, to enable a man to perform any one part with tolerable success, it can be no wonder that the art has not as yet, in modern times at least, reached the desired perfection ; nor ought we to be surprised to find even the most celebrated masters materially defective in some one or more of its branches, those who possessed invention having been frequently deficient in execution ; those who studied colouring often neglected drawing ; and those who attended to form and character having been too apt to disregard composition and the proper management of light and shadow. The whole together, indeed, seems almost too great for the grasp of human powers, unless excited, expanded, and invigorated by such enthusiastic and continued encouragement as that which exclusively marks the bright æra of Grecian taste.

“Impressed as I am at the present moment with a full conviction of the difficulties attendant on the practice of painting, I cannot

* Richardson's Theory.

but feel it also my duty to caution every one who hears me against entering into it from improper motives, and with inadequate views of the subject, as they will, thereby, only run a risk of entailing misery and disgrace on themselves and their connections during the rest of their lives. Should any student, therefore, happen to be present who has taken up the art on the supposition of finding it an easy and amusing employment, — any one who has been sent into the academy by his friends, on the idea that he may cheaply acquire an honourable and profitable profession, — any one who has mistaken a petty kind of imitative monkey talent for genius, — any one who hopes by it to get rid of what he thinks a more vulgar or disagreeable situation, to escape confinement at the counter or the desk, — any one urged merely by vanity or interest, — or, in short, impelled by any consideration but a real and unconquerable passion for excellence, — let him drop it at once, and avoid these walls, and every thing connected with them, as he would the pestilence; for if he have not this unconquerable liking, in addition to all the requisites above enumerated, he may pine in indigence, or skulk through life as a hackney likeness-taker, a copier, a drawing-master, or pattern-drawer to young ladies; or he may turn picture-cleaner, and help time to destroy excellencies which he cannot rival, — but he must never hope to be, in the proper sense of the word, a painter.

“ Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to excellence, and few there be that find it. True as this undoubtedly is in all cases, in no instance will it be found so applicable as the present; for in no profession will the student have so many difficulties to encounter; — in no profession so many sacrifices to make; — in no profession will he have to labour so hard and study so intensely; — and in no profession is the reward of his talents so precarious and uncertain, as is lamentably proved by every day’s experience, and by every page of history.

“ Let me not be told,” continues Mr. Opie, “ that by such assertions I am raising obstacles and throwing obstructions in the paths of men of genius, for to *such* obstacles act as a stimulus; what quenches

others gives them fire ; and I am confident a knowledge of the truth will, in the end, equally benefit the art and the artist. Should any one be discouraged by it, I will say to him, ‘ I have rendered you an essential service ; you will soon find some other situation better suited to your talents.’ But to those who can, undismayed, look all the difficulties in the face ; who have made up their minds to conquer ; who are ready to sacrifice their time, their ease, their pleasure, their profit, and devote themselves, soul and body, to the art, — in short, who cannot be restrained from the pursuit of it, to those I will say, ‘ You alone are *worthy*, you alone are *likely* to succeed : you give the strongest hopes that can be obtained of possessing all the necessary requisites, and there is every probability that you will do honour to your art, your country, and yourselves ; for nothing is denied to persevering and well-directed industry.’ ” *

“ Every art,” observes Mr. Shee, “ is made up of certain parts, which may be called its instruments — the means by which its effects are produced : in proportion to the skill with which he uses these instruments, we value the dexterity of the workman ; and according to the subject upon which he employs them we estimate his genius. The instruments of painting are design, composition, chiaro-’scuro, colouring, and execution ; and these instruments, it may be said, are of such arduous management, that to acquire equal skill in the use of them all is beyond the reach of human ingenuity, and to attempt it but an injudicious diversion of those powers which, in a more restricted exertion, might attain to pre-eminent dexterity ; that de-

* Opie’s Lectures on Painting.

Just on the eve of his work going to the press, the author observed, in a weekly paper, recently printed, the following observations, viz.

“ Whether it be a subject of gratulation, or whether it should be deplored, that the profession of the fine arts is thus annually adding so many members to its lists, we pretend not to determine. For the present, we see enough to justify the old observation, ‘ that many an aspiring wight mistakes the love of a particular art for a genius for that art, an error upon which numberless egotists have been shipwrecked, ruined, and lost.’ We fear that the candidates for public favour increase in too rapid a ratio for the growth of patronage.” — *Somerset House Gazette*, April 24. 1824.

sign, composition, chiaro-'scuro, and colouring, though but parts of painting, are studies, each of which, is in itself, sufficient to occupy, through life, the whole force of the human faculties, and that conspicuous excellence in one of those qualities has always been considered an undeniable proof of genius, and a certain passport to fame."*

Such are the opinions of those who have not only tried, but in a very eminent degree overcome the difficulties attending the art. As it appeared next to impossible for any one, unacquainted with the obstacles to be surmounted, and the powers necessarily required in their accomplishment, to have an adequate idea of the value of fine pictures, or to be at all sensible of the degree in which we stand indebted to those distinguished artists who have produced them, the author has thought it but doing justice to his subject, to set before the reader, in as perspicuous a manner as he was able, the nature and extent of those difficulties, and, in addition, to point out the several endowments and qualifications by which only they can be successfully opposed and finally overcome.

As a conclusion to these remarks upon colouring, and the enumeration of the various obstacles which the artist has to encounter in order to arrive at excellence in his pursuit, the writer will mention an adventure which happened to the cranium of an unfortunate German painter, while engaged in the practice of his art, in the Imperial Gallery of the Belvidere, at Vienna, by which it will be seen, in addition to those already enumerated, how many and various are the impediments and perplexities to which the profession is liable.

One day, when the emperor with his attendants was walking round the gallery, he stopped, as he was sometimes accustomed to do, near the easel of an artist who was employed in copying one of the finest pictures in the collection. As this person was proceeding in his work, apparently with considerable success, his Majesty was

* Shee's Elements of Art.

pleased to express his approbation of his performance to the painter himself. The artist, who was a very modest man, and considerably advanced in years, was so exceedingly overcome by the very flattering notice so graciously bestowed, that in the act of stooping, in conformity with the excessive humility of his mind, and his anxious desire of acknowledging in a suitable manner his very grateful sense of so distinguished an honour, his wig unfortunately fell from his head, directly upon the palette which he held in his hand. The confusion and embarrassment of the poor painter may be easily conceived ; with the greatest alacrity he took up his wig, and in a hurried manner replacing it on his pate, sought to apologise for so indecorous a mishap. The ill-fated man, having the use only of one of his hands, his palette and brushes being held in the other, was unable to adjust, with precision, the covering of his head, which being put on quite awry, and covered, of course, all over with mingled blotches of blue, red, yellow, &c. presented a most ludicrous appearance for the emperor and his suite.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

NECESSITY OF CAUTION IN SKETCHING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY. — ADVENTURE WHICH BEFEL THE AUTHOR WHILE SO ENGAGED. — SCENERY OF ITALY PECULIARLY INTERESTING FROM THE ASSOCIATIONS CONNECTED WITH IT. — ROME THE BEST PLACE OF STUDY FOR AN ARTIST. — ART THE CHIEF OBJECT OF INTEREST WITH ALL CLASSES IN THAT CITY. — ENTHUSIASM EXCITED BY THE GRANDEUR OF ITS ANTIQUITIES AND WORKS OF ART. — FRENCH PAINTERS. — GALLERY OF THE LOUVRE. — DIFFERENT METHOD OF STUDY, OBSERVABLE IN THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH STUDENTS. — NATIONAL GALLERY.

THE author not being without hope that, in the perusal of these remarks, and the praises bestowed upon landscape painting, and the study of nature with a view to the picturesque, some of his readers may be induced, perhaps, to take up so agreeable and interesting a pursuit ; and being desirous, at the same time, of rendering his subject as little tedious as possible, it will not, he trusts, bear the appearance of egotism if he ventures to introduce the relation of an occurrence which happened to him some years ago while sketching ; which, as it may be useful in pointing out the necessity of caution in the taking of views, more particularly in a foreign country, he hopes will not be altogether unacceptable.

Wandering out, one fine afternoon, in the neighbourhood of Trieste, in search of the picturesque, I was induced, such was the increasing interest excited by the prospect, to extend my walk much beyond the usual limit. Having my thoughts entirely occupied with

the surrounding scenery, little attention was paid to the reflection which occurred at the time, that I was committing an imprudence in venturing, unaccompanied, along an unfrequented path, so far from the town. So great, indeed, was my eagerness to obtain a commanding situation for taking a sketch, that I was quite unaware, notwithstanding the loneliness of the way, to what a distance I had gone, before gaining the point so much desired.

Here, at once, burst forth the most beautiful landscape it is possible to conceive; away went all thoughts of apprehension, and the stupendous attractions alone of this magnificent view arrested every power of my mind. It is at such moments that it may be said, "*vox faucibus hæret!*"—the power of speech is suspended, and the whole heart and soul become thrilled with sensations of delight. I was, in fact, as it were, chained to the spot, and forthwith sat down, determined to carry away as much of this earthly paradise as I possibly could.

For a considerable time my work went on in the most successful manner, and the town, the port, and other accompaniments were nearly complete, not a single passenger all the while, either on horseback or on foot, having gone by, when, suddenly my eye was caught by the figure of a man sliding down from the wall, against which I was seated, at a little distance on the left; presently after another showed himself in a similar way on the contrary side; then another, and another still. In this manner six or seven stout-looking men were successively upon their legs, each armed with a stake, and bearing a stiletto by his side. More ruffian-like looking fellows it is not easy to conceive, affording to the life a true specimen of that Salvator-like being whom our poet describes, and in the very identical land,

“ Where the rude Carinthian boor
Against the houseless stranger shuts his door.”

GOLDSMITH.

As it was sufficiently clear, by the looks and the cautious proceedings of these people, that I was the object about whom they

were concerned, I began, in a bold and free manner, to draw the huge branches and foliage of a large tree, stretching quite over the greater part of my design ; for it at once struck me, how strangely imprudent I had been in selecting for my subject the fortress and other warlike defences of the place, the delineation of all which being nearly complete, could not, it was certain, but afford evident ground for suspicion, should these men look upon me, as it then occurred to me they might, in the light of a spy.

To surround and to seize upon an individual armed with no other weapon than a black-lead pencil, could be no very hazardous enterprise ; notwithstanding which the greatest caution was observed, under the supposition, as it might seem, that concealed fire-arms were in my possession. To do this was the effect only of an instant, one aiming a blow at my skull, while two others seized hold of my arms, the rest standing in a threatening posture in front. By suddenly dipping my head, I was able, luckily, to escape any very material injury from the first, thanks to my stout English hat ; a little more, indeed, and there must have been at once an end both to my sketching and my life.

To my remonstrance that they were mistaken in supposing me to be either a Frenchman or a spy, and that on the contrary I was a Signor Inglese taking views solely for my amusement, no other answer was given than a savage sort of laugh, although it was evident that my meaning was not misunderstood.

After ransacking my pockets, and carefully examining my clothes, I was compelled to accompany these ruffians in the direction of the town, being escorted like a malefactor, in the centre of four of them ; one of whom marched immediately in front, another close behind, and one on each side of me, the rest keeping a look out, as if they apprehended some rescue at hand. Our march had been continued in the manner described for somewhat more than a mile, when we were met by another party of similarly looking men. Here a parley ensued, in which high words very shortly took place, which were presently followed by scuffling and blows, it being plainly the

intention of these people to get possession of the prisoner in a forcible manner. This attempt, however, was successfully resisted, and the assailing party finding themselves not sufficiently strong, judged it more prudent to relinquish the object of contention.

Though I found the language (a sort of *patois*, between German and Italian) of these mountaineers quite unintelligible, it was manifest, from their threats and imprecations, that no good was intended towards me; I was, therefore, extremely rejoiced at finding myself once more under the comparatively quiet, though secure custody of my first acquaintance, who could not but be looked upon now as in some degree my protectors and friends; so true it is, that the dread of an impending evil, however formidable, ceases to excite our alarm the moment we are threatened by another more perilous.

Here then again was I attended and guarded as before, proceeding at a round pace, in the direction of Trieste. In somewhat above an hour and a half, if I may guess from the time that I was first seized, we approached the suburb of the town; no sooner was our appearance observed, than people began to collect from all sides, and these increasing continually with our progress through the streets, a considerable body was very soon formed, which by the time that we entered the market-place had grown to an absolute crowd.

Surrounded in this tumultuous manner, it was not long before we arrived at the Hotel de Ville, or Town Hall. For some time no credit was given to any explanation I could make; for the circumstance of being unable to produce my passport, or what amounted to the same thing, the protection of police, or, as it is called, "*La Carte de Suretè*," without which no one, in a country where war is carrying on, should at any time venture to stir out, coupled with the singularly suspicious appearance which my drawing produced, led every one to be decidedly of opinion that I was in reality no other than a spy.

Upon the arrival, however, of the English Consul, who had been sent for at my request, a different aspect was given to the



affair, it being immediately ascertained that the whole business had originated in mistake, and the officers of police did not hesitate to express themselves as extremely sorry for what had happened, assuring me, however, at the same time, that I had reason to consider myself as singularly fortunate that nothing more serious had occurred.

I learnt afterwards from Mr. Anderson, our consul, that my escape had certainly been a narrow one, and which, he said, might fairly be looked upon as next to miraculous; for knowing so well the peasantry in the vicinity, it seemed quite surprising to him that I had not been murdered on the spot; and that, moreover, had the party we met succeeded in getting me into their hands, such must inevitably have been my fate. This gentleman informed me that he was acquainted with a vast number of instances in which the soldiers of the French army, which had been in the neighbourhood only a short time before, had been privately despatched; and that he had himself seen the graves of many such victims, there being scarcely a countryman who could not point to some place or other in his garden or vineyard, and say, "Here lies one Frenchman,—here are buried two," and sometimes even a greater number. It was reported, indeed, that Bonaparte did not scruple to declare, that he lost more men by assassination, during the time that his army was quartered at Trieste, than in any other way.

Thus ended my adventure, the particulars relating to which made a good deal of noise at the time. The above was not the only occurrence in which my enthusiasm in pursuit of the art was attended with considerable risk; having been somewhat roughly handled by a long-whiskered sentinel near the walls of Verona, at the time that Mantua was besieged, the bombardment of which was distinctly to be heard at the time. Of this rencounter, however, I shall refrain from saying any thing further, having already, it is to be feared, exhausted the patience of my reader. I will just observe, that in the Tyrol, where the peasantry are for the most part armed with a rifle, the greatest caution is required. In the neighbourhood

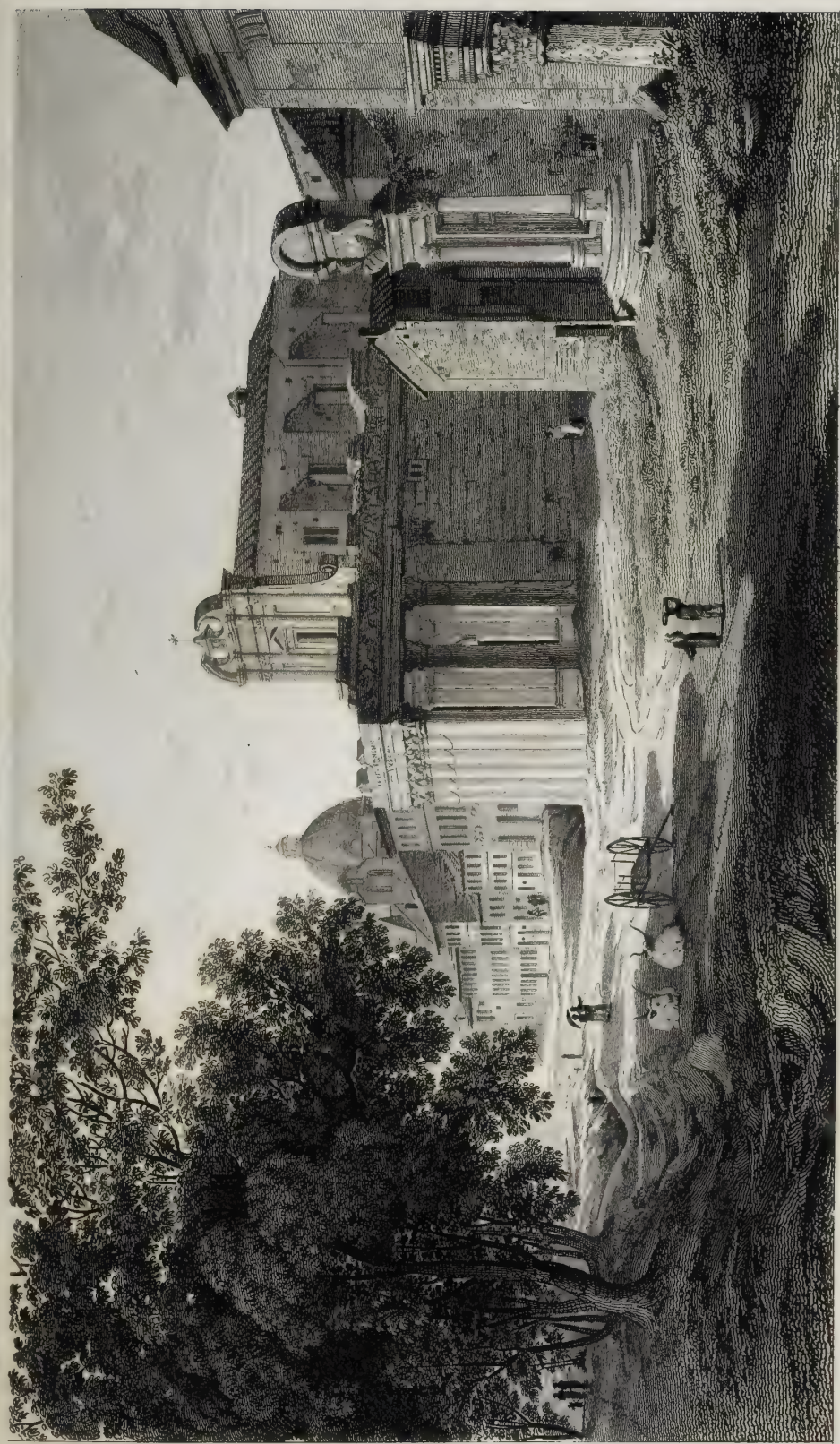
of Rome, on the contrary, where these matters are more understood, no such apprehensions need be entertained, and an artist may exercise his pursuit, either in the most populous or the least frequented districts thereabouts, without the smallest notice being taken of him; such, at least, was the case at the period to which the author alludes.

Though the pleasure which sketching affords must, in any country, prove of a very superior kind, it is in Italy, and especially in the vicinity of the last-mentioned capital, that it can be enjoyed in its highest degree. This arises not so much from the superior beauty or grandeur of the actual scenery, which, however, it must be confessed, can no where be surpassed, as from the singularly interesting associations connected with it. It has been well observed, indeed, that "the finest countries in the world when they retrace no recollection, when they do not carry the stamp of any remarkable event, are without interest, when compared with classic ground." *

" Fair Italy !
Thou art the garden of the world, the home
Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree;
Even in thy desert, what is like to thee ?
Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
More rich than other climes' fertility;
Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced
With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced." BYRON.

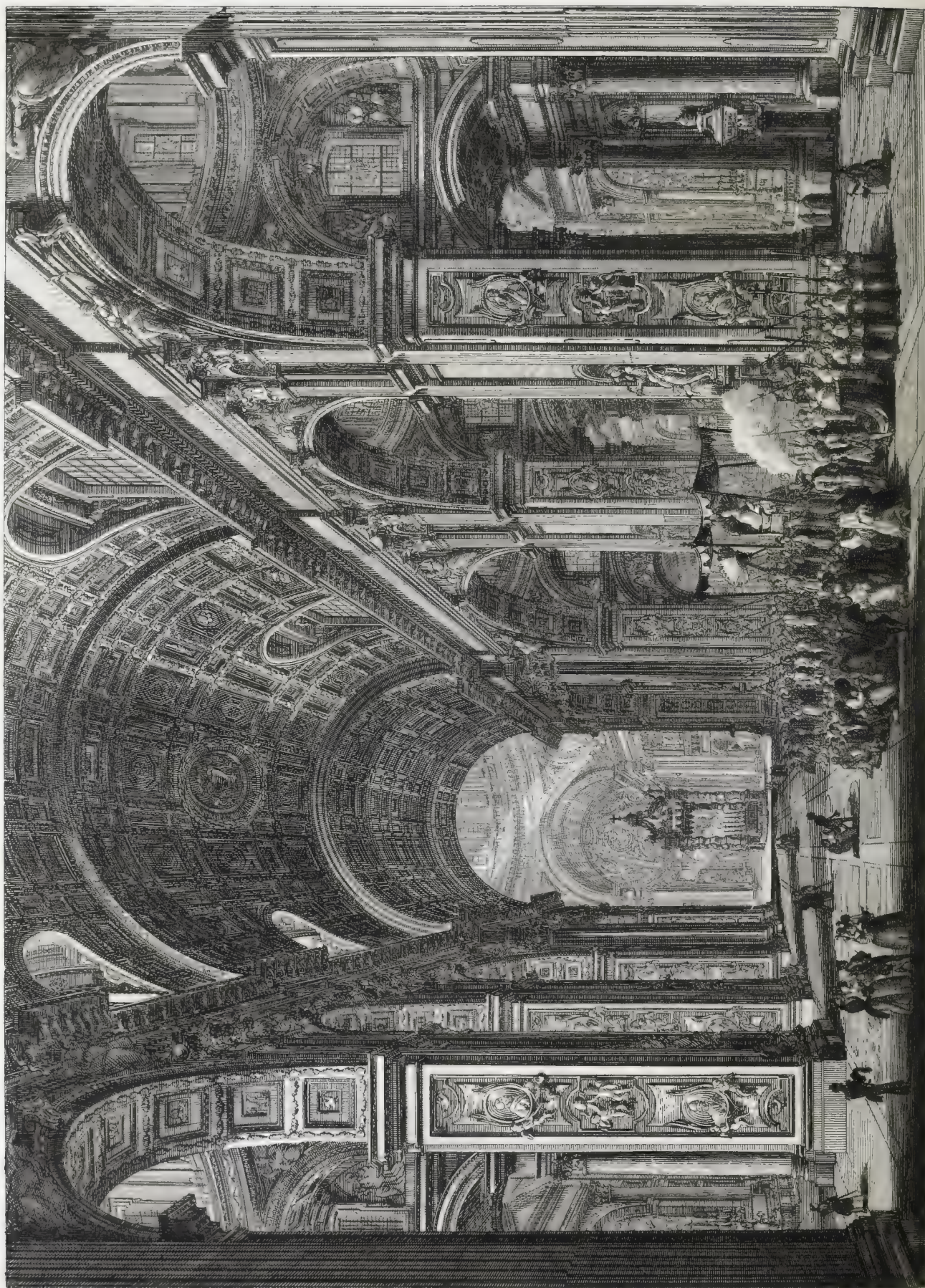
That Rome is the place, beyond comparison, above all others, for an artist to form himself in, there cannot remain even a doubt. A journey thither, provided nothing else were obtained, would be amply compensated by the acquisition alone of that almost indescribable spirit of enthusiasm almost invariably inspired by the genius of the place; and without which it is in vain to expect any thing either great or sublime. The very astonishing manner in which, as if by some spell of enchantment, the stranger is awakened to the contemplation of art, and the singular devotion with which, upon his

* Madame De Stael.



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very arrival almost, (supposing him to be gifted with only a moderate degree of taste,) he bends his thoughts and attention to things connected with it, are circumstances which can be understood by those persons only who have visited that city.

The sort of emotion here mentioned is not momentary or of a transient nature, but is kept up and nourished by an excitement continually at work ; and before the new comer has been at Rome half a dozen days, he finds himself carried irresistibly along by that intensity of feeling and that ardour which animate every class of society in the place.

In other capitals, it is true, statues and pictures, and objects well fitted for the student in art, may be abundantly found ; but the grand stirring principle, that Promethean fire, which warms and gives life to the votary of taste, is no where experienced in one half so powerful a degree. Every thing, indeed, conspires to keep alive this sentiment. The objects of grandeur and interest by which the visitor is surrounded on every side, and the recollections and classical associations they convey ; the curiosity, eagerness, and anxiety that is felt to realise those expectations which may have been previously formed of making acquaintance with scenes and localities where the heroes and sages of antiquity have trod, the pictures and statues which the museums of the Vatican and Capitol contain ; besides the innumerable palaces and villas of easy access, all filled with works calculated to excite the most ardent feelings of admiration and delight ; — these, and so many other interesting objects, and which are to be met with in this enchanting city alone, keep the mind in one continued state of enquiry, in which nothing like stagnation, indifference, or *ennui* can ever be known. Art, in fact, and works of art, are here the every-day business of life, and our walks, our rides, our conversations, and our very meals, even, partake of objects connected with them.

Travellers, excepting perhaps some few, who, from professional motives, may be led to indulge in a more accurate examination, are usually content with a mere cursory view of the curiosities or works

of art contained in them ; but at Rome things are conducted on a quite different plan, and so catching is the ardour which prevails, that little else will suffice but joining, with paper and pencil in hand, the busy throng of adventurers every where engaged in their eager pursuit of the arts.

During the period that the author resided there, might be seen numbers of amateurs of independent fortune, who were under no necessity, from pecuniary motives, of toiling or harassing themselves, but who, from the mere excitement which example creates, and that extraordinary interest so universally felt, and which is conspicuous in the activity and industry of all, worked as hard, and became as intent on their studies, as those whose less fortunate lot obliged them to slave for their support. Such, indeed, were the exertions in this way of several gentlemen, that they actually outdid, in their number of sketches, many even of the regular artists and professional students.

That the same sort of feeling may be expected to take place in any other capital, let the accumulation of fine specimens, in either sculpture or painting, be ever so numerous or select, it is in vain to suppose. We have already seen, that in a neighbouring country the experiment has been tried, and with how much success let the productions of its modern artists declare. The national taste, indeed, of the French does not appear to have been improved in the degree that might have been expected by the treasures which the Louvre contained ; and, in as far as the arts of Napoleon's empire derived advantage from the theft, he might have saved himself the disgrace of having pillaged the whole Continent in the very outrageous and unjustifiable manner he did. The dry, glaring, and, for the most part, unsightly specimens of the modern French School, as seen in the gallery of the Luxembourg, are so unlike, and so totally foreign to any thing which the works of the great masters of antiquity display, that no one could, for a moment, suppose the artists by whom they have been executed had ever set eyes upon a single picture of the kind.



St. Peter's Basilica

“ Whether we consider,” says an author of discernment, “ the character of these removals, with reference to the glory, as it is called, of those who committed them, or to the interests of taste, it will be found that they chiefly reflect ignominy and merit censures.

“ The finest emotions and associations of thought which these works suggested in their original seats, became dissolved and dissipated by their transportation. The statue that warmed and inspired the soul in Rome, is chiefly a prompter of regrets and misgivings when placed in a gallery of the Tuilleries. The enthusiasm excited in its primitive situation was of the highest poetical and moral kind ; but this is chilled when we find it surrounded by French academicians and connoisseurs taking notes and snuff.

“ Neither can I allow that even the study of art is likely to be benefited by the change. A worse mistake cannot be committed than the supposition that facilities are chiefly useful to the cause of taste and science ; — it would be much more true to say, that difficulties and impediments do it service. The pockets and convenience of students may be consulted, but nothing that tames the ambition of genius, or the enthusiasm with which the works of art are regarded, can promote its excellence or reputation. Let the student be exposed to hazards ; the fire is necessary to part pure metal from the dross ; — let him incur difficulties ; they will, if he be worthy of his pursuit, increase his ardour ; — a lover’s passion is rendered more intense by having to rescue his beloved from behind the bars of a window. Let the student be led in a painful pilgrimage to the honour of his divinity, from Paris to Germany, from Germany to Rome, from Rome to Florence. The sacred flame will be fanned by the motion, and his mind be informed and corrected by observation.” *

“ To wave the consideration,” says another writer upon the same subject, “ of the morality of this act of rapine, it may be doubted whether, instead of promoting the arts, it did not retard their pro-

* Scott’s Visit to Paris in 1814.

gress. For if success depend upon genius, and genius be awakened and brought into action by circumstances ; if a certain agitation of mind, a fermentation of thought, an earnestness of effort, or, in one word, if enthusiasm be as essential in painting and sculpture as it is in poetry and eloquence, the sole question then will be, whether Paris or Rome is most likely to produce in the mind this creative power, this *vivida vis*, the very soul and source of excellence. In the former there is not one object to excite emotion, nor one monument to awaken recollection ; no scene to enchant the eye, no form to swell the imagination ; while the latter teems with the images of the past and the wonders of the present, exhibiting the grand or the beautiful at every step, and keeping the stronger and more effective emotions of the mind, its admiration, delight, and melancholy, in constant action.

‘ Veuve du peuple roi, reine encore du monde.’

DE LILLE.

“ But independent of this consideration, as long as the Camere di Raffaello remain in Rome, and that will be as long as Rome exists, so long the painter will consider it as the school of art ; and so long must those who profess and those who admire the art flock to the Vatican as to its sanctuary. All the pictures in the gallery of Paris united do not equal the skill, the variety, the invention, the execution, the forms, the groups, the lights, the shades, that breathe, and live, and move, and flit over those wonderful walls, and set the painter’s soul on fire as he contemplates.

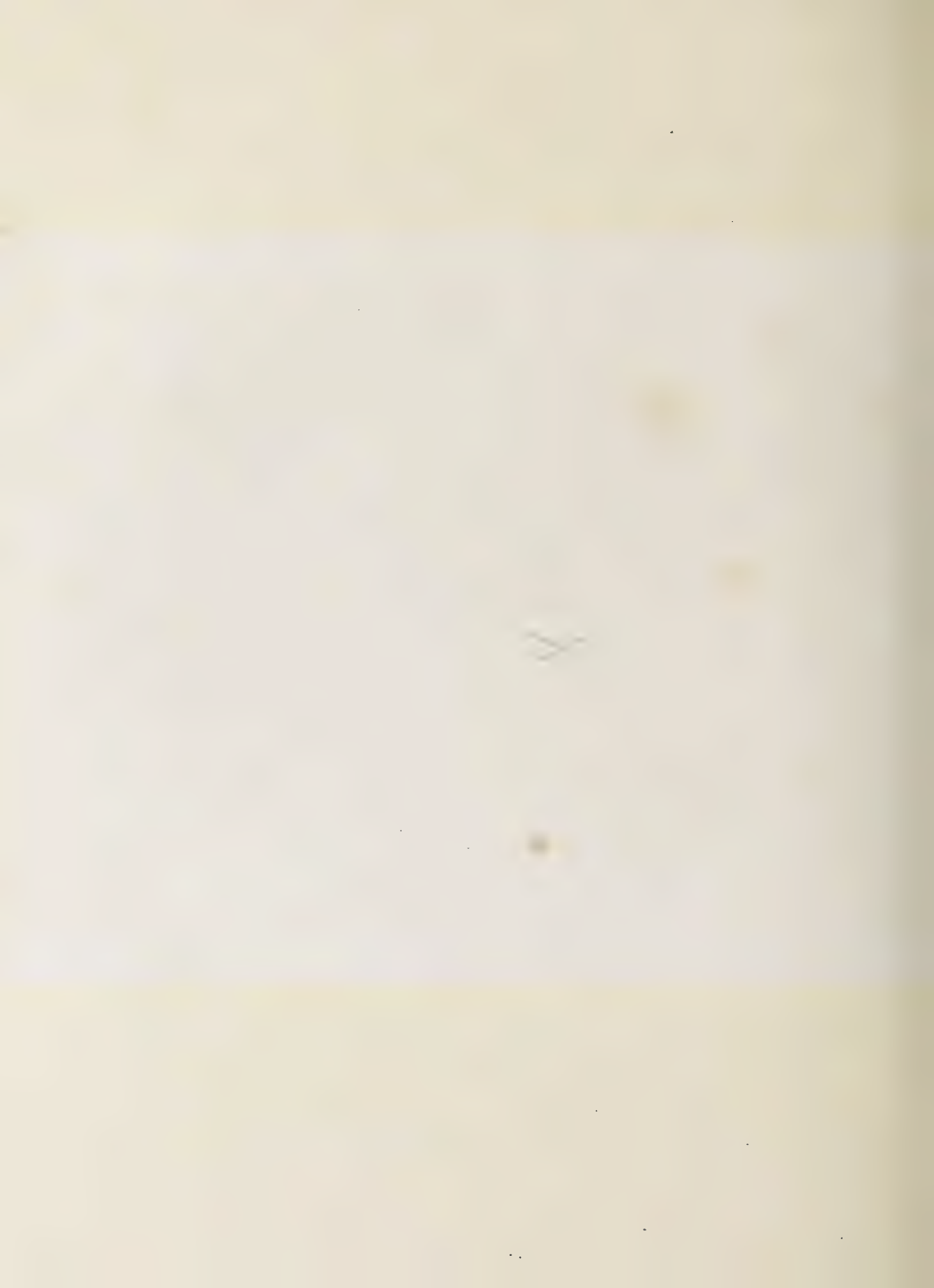
“ We do not discover that the possession of so many masterpieces has had any very perceptible effect on the taste of the public (in Paris) or the execution of the artists.” *

It is not the antiquities and works of art only that tend to excite the enthusiasm which the stranger feels upon visiting Rome ; every thing conspires to raise and to keep alive such feelings ; added to these, the extraordinary interest excited by the number of accom-

* Eustace’s Letter from Paris, 1814.



THE SISTINE CHAPEL.



plished visitors of all countries and religions, who, in constant succession, come in pilgrimage to the shrine of antiquity, and who, by the contemplation of the merits and glories of departed worth, often feel themselves, as it were, miraculously endowed with new qualities. "The collision of minds, fraught with learning, in that high state of excitement, which the genius of the place produces on the coldest imaginations, together with those innumerable, brilliant, and transitory topics which are never elicited in any other city, make the Roman conversations a continual exercise of the understanding. The details of political intrigue and the follies of individuals excite but little interest amongst strangers in Rome. It seems as if by an universal tacit resolution, national and personal peculiarities and prejudices are forgotten, and that all strangers simultaneously turn their attention to the transactions and affairs of former ages, and of statesmen and authors now no more. Their mornings are spent in surveying the monuments raised to public virtue, and in giving local features in their minds to the knowledge which they have acquired by the perusal of those works that have perpetuated the dignity of the Roman character. Their evenings are often allotted to the comparison of their respective conjectures, and to ascertain the authenticity and history of relics which they may have collected of ancient art. Every recreation of the stranger at Rome is an effort of memory, of abstraction, and of fancy." *

Judging from the author's admiration of every thing connected with this interesting city, it would seem that he considers a residence at Rome as almost an indispensable requisite for the perfection of a painter. It must, indeed, be confessed, that he is very much inclined to that way of thinking; more especially, when he reflects upon the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, of Wilson, and of Barry, in which are to be seen so much of the lofty and sublime.

That there are excellent artists who have never seen Italy it would be perfectly absurd to deny, since, at this very moment, some

* Galt's Life of West.

of our own bear evident testimony to the fact.* Still the writer cannot help being of opinion, that even these, were the experiment to be tried, might derive very essential advantage from the superior opportunities for study, and the valuable and classical information to be acquired in that spirit-stirring place. Notwithstanding this, let it not be supposed, that the advantages to be derived from the vast number of fine specimens of art to be found in our own country, so many of which have been brought originally from that very seat of the arts, are lightly esteemed by the author; or that it is to be inferred from what hath been said respecting the little improvement which the French appear to have gained from that grand assemblage of old masters, which they boasted of not long ago, that the benefits which such a collection is calculated to confer, are lost sight of; or that, moreover, a national gallery, in our own country, will not be most highly conducive to our advancement in art; the writer is the furthest possible from entertaining any opinion of the kind. There is, however, a circumstance deserving of some notice in our consideration of this subject, and which may, it is presumed, in some degree account for so apparent a contradiction.

It is the difference, at all times, so strikingly observable in the dispositions and national character of the two countries, and the different objects which, generally speaking, (for there are many excep-

* It is believed that Mr. Hilton is of this number. A painter of greater powers in invention, design, execution, and colouring, the world has not been able to boast of for a length of time. It is surely to be lamented, that talents so splendid should be suffered to exert themselves without due encouragement; and that such fine specimens as those we have lately seen from the pencil of this accomplished artist, should, for want of a patron, be taken down from the walls, successively, of Somerset House and the British Institution, to be carried back, with their just claims to public favour humbled, disappointed, and mortified, to no other than to those enclosing the study of him who has produced them! "*O tempora, O mores!*"

"One of the noblest efforts of modern painting, in the splendid composition from Comus, a picture combining the classic conception of Poussin with the gorgeous harmony of Titian, is still unsold. Yet we boldly aver, that modern works, such as this, would grace any picture gallery in the world."—*Somerset House Gazette*, for March 20. 1824.



tions,) their respective students in art have in view, while pursuing their studies.

The natural modesty and diffidence, usually observable in the English character, form a striking contrast to the opposite vanity and self-conceit which prevail so very frequently in that of our neighbours; and is, perhaps, no where more generally to be seen than in one of the large public galleries of pictures abroad.

From this disparity arises a most surprising difference, as to the respective advantages to be gained by the two nations, in studying the works of the old masters.

An English student is sufficiently satisfied if, in his copy, he can so far succeed as to imitate, or even come near to, the excellence of the picture he may have selected for his improvement; whereas a Frenchman seldom believes that he shall not quite equal, if not improve upon, the original. The author has witnessed a hundred instances of these opposite national feelings, as well as the certain result, invariably visible, as might naturally be expected, in the productions of the respective artists, actuated by the one or other of these sentiments. For our neighbours to have failed, therefore, in deriving advantages from the opportunities which they possessed, is no reason for supposing that similar assistance would be useless to us.

On the contrary, nothing tends so effectually to excite ardour and ambition in the youthful mind as the sight and contemplation of splendid examples of art; and without a certain degree of copying in the commencement of his studies, there can be little chance of ulterior success.

After the taste has been in some degree formed, and a correct knowledge of the figure obtained, together with a certain proficiency in the practice of the mechanical part of the art, then is the time for a visit to Rome; after which the old masters would be studied with additional interest and effect.

“I am of opinion,” says Sir Joshua, “that the study of other masters may be extended throughout our whole lives, without any

danger of the inconveniences with which it is charged, of enfeebling the mind, or preventing us from giving that original air which every work undoubtedly ought always to have.

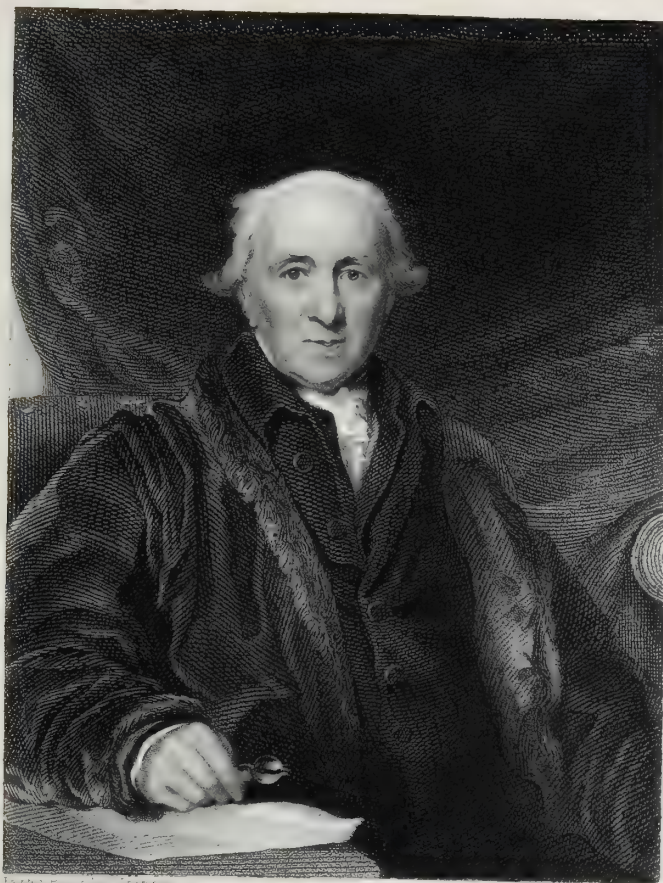
“It is of the greatest consequence,” continues Sir Joshua, “that our minds should be habituated to the contemplation of excellence, and that so far from being contented to make such habits the discipline of youth only, we should, to the last moment of our lives, continue a settled intercourse with all the true examples of grandeur. Their inventions are not the food of our infancy, but the substance which supplies the fullest maturity of our vigour.” *

Considered in this light, a National Gallery cannot fail to be of infinite use ; it will, in his early practice, excite in the student a love and admiration of his art, and, at a more mature period, contribute to regulate his taste and enlarge his imagination. “Those great masters,” says again our inimitable instructor, “who have travelled the same road with success, are the most likely to conduct others. The works of those who have stood the test of ages have a claim to that respect and veneration to which no modern can pretend. The duration and stability of their fame is sufficient to evince that it has not been suspended upon the slender thread of fashion and caprice. There is no danger of studying too much the works of these great men.” †

Had there fortunately been, some trifling number of years ago, a National Gallery, what a collection of pictures would this country, even already, have possessed ! The Dulwich and Fitzwilliam pictures, it would most assuredly have contained ; and who can say what, in that case, our patriotic and liberal-minded Sir Joshua might have done ? Such, I have good reason to believe, were the sentiments of the late Mr. Angerstein respecting this very important subject. There is little doubt he would have bequeathed a contribution of no inconsiderable importance, out of his very splendid and unique collection, had there but been a suitable receptacle for them.

* Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

† Ibid.



JOHN JULIUS ANGERSTEIN, ESQ

J. J. Angerstein

How singularly gratifying, therefore, is the reflection, that a harbour, at once commodious and capacious, is about to be constructed, and that we have no longer to fear still further shipwreck of commodities so valuable, the possession of which cannot fail to prove, in a very high degree, conducive to the welfare and renown of Great Britain.

CHAP. II.

CURIOUS OCCURRENCE THAT HAPPENED TO THE AUTHOR. — PLEASURE AFFORDED BY A VISIT TO ROME. — OBJECTS OF STUDY WITH A VIEW TO FUTURE ENJOYMENT. — VIRTUOUS EMPLOYMENT THE TRUE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS. — ADVANTAGE DERIVED FROM THE CULTIVATION OF TASTE. — THE CALLOUSNESS OF SOME MINDS TO THE BEAUTIES OF NATURE. — MANY PERSONS INCAPABLE OF BEING HAPPY UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, HOWEVER PROSPEROUS. — CONTEMPLATION OF NATURE. — NECESSITY OF KEEPING OUR THOUGHTS USEFULLY EMPLOYED. — MISFORTUNE, SOONER OR LATER THE LOT OF ALL. — ADVANTAGES TO BE DERIVED FROM THE CULTIVATION OF TASTE, IN THE SEASON OF AFFLICTION. — TRUE HAPPINESS OF A RETIRED NATURE. — THE PURSUITS RECOMMENDED THE BEST RESOURCES UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE. — WHATEVER PURIFIES, FORTIFIES THE HEART. — THE ARTS SOFTEN AND REFINES. — RELIGION THE INSEPARABLE COMPANION OF THE LOVE OF NATURE.

THE relation of a somewhat curious adventure that occurred to the author during his residence at Rome, and which the mention of that capital recalls to his memory, may not, perhaps, afford an unacceptable variety to the subject.

Returning one day from a sketching excursion along the Appian way, and having recently entered the Porta San Sebastiano, I perceived, in that unfrequented part of the extensive and uninhabited portion of the ancient city, a small portal standing partly open in one of those walls that are usually continued on both sides of the road, and which my curiosity induced me to pass through.

This proved to be the entrance into a rather spacious quadrangular court, bearing the appearance of having been formerly a garden, and which, from the vast number of human skulls and cross bones, arranged with peculiar order and regularity around, seemed like the cemetery belonging to some convent, of which there are so many in the neighbourhood of Rome. The enclosure described led into another smaller court-yard, containing several different apartments, the doors of which were all open, although not a soul was to be



« uno nel 1881 »

« dal 1881 »

« Amici »

seen. Having by this time advanced to a considerable distance from the first entrance-door, and reflecting that I was alone, and surrounded at the same time by such a multitude of cheerless accompaniments, the eloquent memorials of death, I began to think within myself it was high time to meditate a retreat from so melancholy an abode. As, however, my eye was attracted by a room still further on, the door of which was also ajar, I ventured, having my curiosity raised by the singularity of the place, to push it open; when, straightway, a spectacle the most appalling was presented to my view, such a one, indeed, as almost petrified my every nerve on the spot.

At the further end of a large and gloomy-looking apartment lay, extended on his back, the naked figure of a man, with his throat cut, to all appearance very recently, from ear to ear; having the head, which was streaming with blood, directly opposed to my view, and which was hanging over the edge of the table, upon which the body was laid. In a sort of gallery yet again further on, I fancied that I perceived something like the figure of a man, gliding along; but such were the dreadful reflections which passed over my mind, that I took very quickly to my heels, never once looking behind until I found myself fairly again in the street, or rather road, as it more properly might be called, from which, recluse and solitary as it was, I made the best of my way. The very uncomfortable sensations which this adventure occasioned, continued to annoy me for some days after it occurred, so incessantly was my mind haunted by the ghastly appearance described.

The author was afterwards informed that the building in question had formerly been a convent, but was subsequently appropriated to anatomical purposes. Never again, however, does he desire to come across so horrifying a spectacle, which, perhaps, under the hands of a Mrs. Radcliffe, might afford no unapt subject for a scene.

As persons unacquainted with the locality of "The City of the Seven Hills," may think it somewhat singular that there should be, within the very walls of a town, tracts so solitary, and at the same

time so extensive, the writer will subjoin a short description of this part of Rome, as it is given in a well written anonymous work, lately published.

“The walls,” says the author, “which now surround the city, form a circuit of about fourteen miles, and comprise an immense extent of unpeopled land. The stranger may wander for hours and miles, within the walls of this great capital, in solitude and silence, as unbroken as if he were in a desert. He will pass along untrodden roads, and by abandoned habitations ; he will see no life within their gates ; no human being to greet him, and no voice will answer to his call. Over a wide extent of Rome, to the south, her hills are desolate. To the north, and in the plain of the Campus Martius alone, there is life and motion.”*

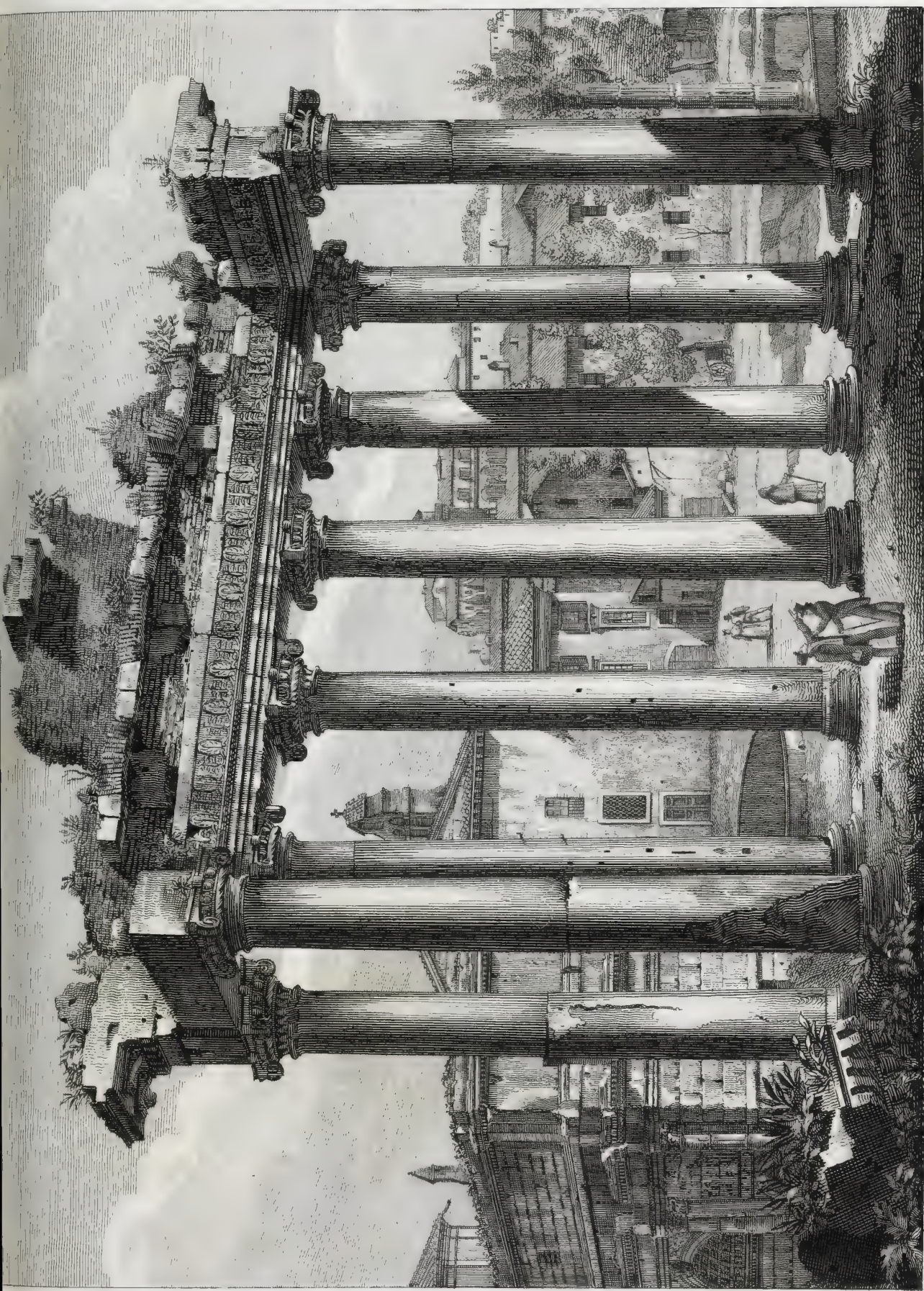
“I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fire had resounded in the halls : and the voice of the people is heard no more. The stream of Clutha was removed from its place, by the fall of the walls. The thistle shook, there, its lonely head : the moss whistled to the wind. Desolate is the dwelling of Moina, silence is in the house of her fathers. Raise the song of mourning, O bards ! over the land of strangers. They have but fallen before us : for, one day, we must fall.”†

While treating upon sketching from nature, the author cannot but recall to his recollection the enjoyment experienced in the many interesting and agreeable parties, so frequently planned during his residence in Rome, for the purpose of carrying away, with the aid of the pencil, memoranda of that highly picturesque scenery, and those magnificent ruins, that meet the traveller on every side, while exploring the venerable and classic remains of this extraordinary place.

“The name of Rome,” says Mr. Eustace, “echoes in our ears from our infancy ; our lisping tongues are tuned to her language ; and our first and most delightful years are passed among her orators,

* Rome in the Nineteenth Century.

† Ossian.



G. Menzies del.

disegnato dal vero

e inciso nel 1832.

. Frammenti del Tempio della Concordia .



poets, and historians. We are taught betimes to take a deep interest in her fortunes, and to adopt her cause as that of our own country, with spirit and passion. Such impressions, made at such an age, are indelible, and, it must be admitted, are likely to influence our feelings and opinions during life.”*

“There are few gratifications more exquisite than those which we experience in being able to identify the scenes and realise the descriptions which have been long consecrated in the mind by genius and virtue, which have supplied the fancy with its earliest images, and are connected in the memory with its most lasting associations. In such moments as these we appear to be able to arrest the progress and lessen the devastations of time. We hardly contemplate with regret the ages that have passed in silence and oblivion; and we behold, for the first time, the fading and faint descriptions of language, stamped with the fresh impressions of reality and truth.”†

“All the distant and romantic events of history are realised by the presence of scenes in which they were acted; the long interval of ages is at once annihilated, and we seem to live, and move, and think, with those who have gone before us. Here, far from every sound and sight of man, and surrounded only with the ruined monuments of ancient greatness, I have, indeed, felt that it is at Rome only we live more in the past than in the present.”‡

Among the many circumstances of a pleasurable nature which the author has experienced, there are scarcely any which have so much contributed to the acquisition of pure, unmixed, and substantial enjoyment, as the course of study and the pursuits which engaged his attention during the period spent in this celebrated nursery of the arts. It is there, in fact, that may be obtained, in a degree superior to what all other places in the world can bestow, materials for furnishing that delightful and inexhaustible source of

* Eustace's Classical Tour through Italy.

† Mitford's Life of Gray.

‡ Rome in the Nineteenth Century.

happiness, which “constant occupation, without care,” never fails to afford; and which cannot, at any time, be wanting to him who is possessed of a mind well stored with recollections and information fitted to produce a relish for the study and attainments of art, together with the various and interesting reminiscences which travelling supplies, let outward circumstances be ever so unfavourable or untoward. “Supposing always a competency,” says our sound and able philosopher, “the genuine source of happiness is virtuous employment, pursued with ardour, and regulated by our own choice.”*

“Oh! blest seclusion from a jarring world,
Which he thus occupied enjoys.”

COWPER.

Such, indeed, have been, in all ages, the sentiments of those whose wisdom has been derived from experience and a knowledge of human nature. “*Is mihi vivere demum, atque frui animâ videtur, qui aliquo negotio intentus, præclari facinoris, aut artis bonæ famam quærit.*”† And such will ever be the case; for whether in the sunshine of prosperity, when all goes on smoothly and well, or in the depressive moments of affliction or ill health, its benign influence will be found invariably the same. The gay assemblages of pleasure, the animating sports of the field, the concert, the ball, or the masquerade, together with every amusement which rational society affords, no one has enjoyed, when used in a moderate way, more than the author; but he can with the greatest truth declare, that in no zest of amusement, or in any assortment of company, however exhilarating or refined, has he experienced one half of the pleasurable, the independent, and lasting gratification derived from that concentration

* Malone's Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

† Sallust. — “As far as my own observation goes, that man appears to me to follow the most rational way of living, and to relish, in a higher degree than any other, the real enjoyments of existence, who is endeavouring to acquire a reputation in the ardent prosecution of some great undertaking, or to distinguish himself in the pursuit of the liberal arts.”



SHAKSPEARE.

THIS transcendent poet of Nature, the glory of the British nation, was the son of Mr. John Shakspeare, a considerable dealer in the wool-trade, at Stratford upon Avon; where our immortal bard, William, the eldest of ten children, was born, on the 16th of April 1564.

After a very slight education at the grammar-school of the town, he applied himself to his father's business; and married, in his seventeenth year, a respectable young woman, in the neighbourhood, whose name was Hathaway.

The circumstance which brought Shakspeare to London is to be regretted, however we may rejoice at the consequence; being nothing less than that of having indiscreetly joined some other thoughtless young men in purloining deer from the adjacent park of Sir Thomas Lucy, who menaced a prosecution.

Whether distress, or the natural bent of his mind, led him to one of the numerous little theatres then abounding in the metropolis and its environs, is by no means ascertainable; but nothing can be more certain, than that, after some time, he was engaged to perform subordinate characters, probably in his own first dramatick efforts.

As an actor, there seems good reason to believe, that he never reached higher than the character of the Ghost, in his tragedy of Hamlet: as a dramatick writer, he soon excelled all that went before him; and, we believe, there are few persons acquainted with his productions who expect ever to see him equalled.

His native goodness of heart, and chearful and agreeable manners, were scarcely surpassed even by his exalted genius.

Having written thirty-six plays; been for a considerable time joint proprietor of the Globe Theatre, Bankside, Southwark; and acquired, by his splendid talents and assiduity, sufficient property to satisfy his very moderate views; he purchased a genteel residence at his native place, and prudently retired from the care and fatigue of business, to pass the remainder of his days with ease and tranquillity, in the rational enjoyment of a rural life.

He died the 23d of April 1616, exactly one week after completing his fifty-second year; and was interred among his ancestors, in the great church of Stratford upon Avon.

Shakspeare's widow survived him seven years; and he left two daughters, who were both married: but his family became extinct in the third generation after his decease. His literary progeny, however, the incorruptible offspring of his immortal mind, will be dear to every grateful and susceptible bosom, till time itself shall be no more.

of self, if the expression may be used, in which, aided by those resources which his own reflections have supplied, and to which the study of nature and the pursuits of art have so very materially contributed, he has felt alike indifferent to the turmoils or the delights which agitate uncultivated minds, and which become restless and discontented because unemployed.

This may, not improbably, have somewhat the appearance of self-praise; such, however, it is far from being intended. That the delightful study here recommended is capable of producing all this, the writer has himself experienced in an eminent degree; and his only concern now is, without consideration of self, to point out, for the instruction and advantage of others, the method of obtaining the like means of enjoyment, accompanied with the same self-satisfaction, and an equal tranquillity of mind.

“ Thus blest, I draw a picture of that bliss;
 Hopeless, indeed, that dissipated minds,
 And profligate abusers of the world
 Created fair so much in vain for them,
 Should seek the guiltless joys that I describe,
 Allured by my report; but sure no less,
 That, self-condemn'd, they must neglect the prize,
 And what they will not taste must yet approve.”

COWPER.

Many persons there are, it cannot admit of a doubt, cold, “dull, and insensible,”

“ Unlustrous as the smoky light that's fed
 With stinking tallow.”

SHAKESPEARE.

who will look upon much that hath been said respecting the author's favourite theme, as nothing better than the wild and wandering imaginings of an enthusiast's mind. To such he seeks not to address himself, they being, he is quite sure, unable to comprehend, and still less capacitated to feel, the nature or the meaning of that species of enjoyment he has endeavoured to describe.

To those more rational and sober-minded beings, however, who will be at the trouble of perusing, with serious attention, such portions of this work as have been extracted from the authorities of

more able writers on the same subject, it will be sufficiently clear that he does not stand single and unsupported in the opinions entertained, and that there certainly have been other enthusiasts as well as himself. The names of Akenside, Thomson, Beattie, Cowper, Richardson, Alison, Stewart, — poets, painters, philosophers, without end, — might be sufficient, it may be thought, to keep him in countenance on this occasion, and to rescue him at once from the charge of an overweening and extravagant admiration of the value and dominion of taste, a studious attention to the cultivation of which he is so desirous to recommend.

That advantages so signal and inestimable are to be obtained by means as unusual as little thought of, there are numbers who will never be brought to believe ; persons, indeed, are to be found, whose minds are so unfortunately constructed as to be altogether devoid of feeling for, and absolutely dead, as it were, to every pleasure of the kind, and to whom such sentiments must appear little else than visionary and absurd ; to talk of “ calm contemplation and poetic ease ” to such, is to address them in a language not only totally unknown to them but perfectly unintelligible.

“ It is strange to observe the callousness of some men, before whom all the glories of heaven and earth pass in daily succession without touching their hearts, elevating their fancy, or leaving any durable remembrance. Even of those who pretend to sensibility, how many are there to whom the lustre of the rising or setting sun, the sparkling concave of the midnight sky, the mountain forest tossing and roaring to the storm, or warbling with all the melodies of a summer evening ; the sweet interchange of hill and dale, shade and sunshine, grove, lawn, and water, which an extensive landscape offers to the view ; the scenery of the ocean, so lovely, so majestic, and so tremendous, and the many pleasant varieties of the animal and vegetable kingdom, would never afford so much real satisfaction as the steams and noise of a ball-room, the insipid fiddling and squeaking of an opera, or the vexations and wranglings of a card-table !

“ But there are some minds of a different make, who, even in



Designed by Burney

From the Model by P. Turnerselli Esq.

Engraved by S. Boreale

*Design of the Monument intended to be erected in the Mausoleum
at Larnaca, to the Memory of Robert Burns.*

*The Poet's genius of my Country joins me as the Poet's Bard of Light
And I stand at the Plough, then his engraving is the me*

the early part of life, receive from the contemplation of nature a species of delight which they would not exchange for any other ; and who, as avarice and ambition are not the infirmities of that period, are indifferent to almost every thing which fortune can refuse, so long as the beauties of nature are open to them, and that they can, with undisturbed enjoyment, feast upon those rapturous delights which their contemplation inspires.

“ Such minds have always in them the seeds of true taste, and frequently of imitative genius. At least, though their enthusiastic or visionary turn of mind (as the man of the world would call it) should not always incline them to practise poetry or painting, we need not scruple to affirm, that without some portion of this enthusiasm, no person ever became a true poet or painter. For he who would imitate the works of nature must first accurately observe them ; and accurate observation is to be expected from those only who take great pleasure in it.” *

“ What strange beings we are ! Since we have a portion of conscious existence, equally capable of enjoying pleasure, happiness, and rapture, or of suffering pain, wretchedness, and misery, it is surely worthy of enquiry, whether there be not such a thing as a science of life ; whether method, economy, and fertility of expedients be not applicable to enjoyments ; and whether there be not a want of dexterity in pleasure, which renders our little scantling of happiness still less ; and a profuseness, an intoxication in bliss, which leads to satiety, disgust, and self-abhorrence. There is not a doubt but that health, talents, character, decent competency, respectable friends, are real substantial blessings ; and yet, do we not daily see those who enjoy many or all of these good things, continue, notwithstanding, to be as unhappy as others, to whose lot few of them have fallen ?” †

“ It is strange to observe, that there are few, if any, in the world who enjoy all the blessings which are bestowed upon them, and make their situation in life as happy as it might be.

* Essay on Poetry and Music. Beattie.

† Burns's Works.

“Those who are freed from cares and anxieties, who are surrounded by all the means of enjoyment, and whose pleasures present themselves without being sought for, are often unhappy in the midst of all, merely because that activity of the mind, in the proper exercise of which our happiness consists, has in them no object on which it may be employed.” *

Pope says, that he never laid his head upon his pillow without reflecting that the most important lesson of his life was to learn the art of being happy within himself.

“At every period of life, whether during the strength of youth or the imbecility of age, the power of employing the mind in some useful or agreeable occupation banishes the dread of solitude, which is as indispensably necessary to give a just, solid, firm, and forcible tone to our thoughts, as a knowledge of the world is to give them richness, brilliancy, and application.” †

“The human mind, we all know, is restless and active; and, if not otherwise engaged, will turn its activity inward, will prey upon and devour itself, and become the destroyer of its own happiness. A very large proportion of the evils which press the heaviest upon us are purely imaginary, are the creation of our own hands, and arise from no other cause than the having nothing else to do but to sit down and make ourselves as miserable as we possibly can.

“One great means, therefore, of promoting cheerfulness, is to keep our thoughts constantly and usefully employed. The pursuit of any important and worthy object is in itself enlivening. Every advance we make in it is a new accession of pleasure; we feel ourselves animated with a growing delight; and go on with an increasing ardour and alacrity to the attainment of the end we have in view.

“He who is employed will be continually animated with new acquisitions, rewarded with new triumphs, and will feel nothing of that languor and flatness, that gloom and melancholy, which are so apt to seize upon unoccupied minds.” ‡

* Miss Bowdler.

† Zimmerman on Solitude.

‡ Porteus.

“Happy, indeed, are they who have acquired a relish for such pleasures as pain and sorrow cannot take away ; since these, sooner or later, must be the lot of all.” *

That sorrow and misfortune, sooner or later, are destined to be the lot of all, history, no less than experience, but too evidently testify. Such, alas ! at this moment is, and has been for a long time, the fate of him who now indites these pages. Here, however, it is, in a more especial manner, that he will rest the chief merit of his cause. Much has been said, in the preceding part of this work, respecting the pleasures and the advantages to be derived from the study of nature and the cultivation of taste ; and great, indeed, they most unquestionably are, in every point of view, and under every circumstance of life. But it is in the dark and melancholy hour of distress, of calamity, and misfortune, when sorrow and affliction, “like an armed man,” obtrude themselves on our path, that the full value of their salutary influence will be found. These pursuits, in fact, beyond all others, are occupations, of which it may be truly said, that they are

“ So pleasing, and so steal away the thought
With such address from themes of sad import,
That, lost in his own musings, happy man !
He feels th’ anxieties of life, denied
Their wonted entertainment, all retire.”

COWPER.

The reader may be assured, this is no vague assertion. There is not any preaching here, but what practice and sad experience have taught.

That we are by nature “born to trouble,” is a truth that both our religion and every day’s demonstration make self-evident to all ; is it not, then, the part of wisdom and sound policy, to be equipped for the tempest, as well as the calm, in the dubious navigation of life ? And may it not be worth while to consider, with some degree of attention, what sort of preparation is most likely to enable us to

* Miss Bowdler.

weather the storm, when it actually arrives? Many are the expedients which the worldly and the vain have recommended for effecting so desirable an end, and which are found to be no less various than the inclinations and dispositions of those by whom they have been suggested.

According to the opinions of some, the most certain and infallible means for dissipating the cares and anxieties of life, are those which the sensual and turbulent excitements afford; “*dum vivimus vivamus**,” say they. Those persons, on the contrary, whose actions and conduct (by which alone, be it observed, a just and satisfactory estimate can be formed) have been the result of experience and dispassionate reasoning, deduced under cool and temperate deliberation, and which might consequently, one may reasonably think, be judged as most likely to furnish the safest examples for our guidance and instruction, are all of them, without exception, for an opposite plan.

As every one must allow this to be a subject of very serious importance, it being a question on which our happiness depends, it may be satisfactory, perhaps, and not out of place, to see what a few only of these last-mentioned moralists have said, concerning a matter, at once so momentous and so highly interesting.

“Whenever we step out of domestic life in search of felicity,” says one, who, having moved in the more elevated rank of society, was fully competent to judge of such matters, “we come back again disappointed, tired, and chagrined. One day passed under our own roof, is worth a thousand in any other place. The noise, the bustle, or as they are politely called, the diversions of life, are despicable and tasteless, when we have once experienced the delights of a fire side.”†

“The great end of prudence,” it is said by the most able moralist of his day, “is to give cheerfulness to those hours which splen-

* “While we live let us enjoy the full pleasures of sense.”

† Lord Ossery’s Letters.

dour cannot gild, and acclamation cannot exhilarate; those soft intervals of unbended amusement, in which a man shrinks to his natural dimensions, and throws aside the ornaments or disguises, which he feels in privacy to be useless encumbrances, and to lose all effect when they become familiar. To be happy at home is the ultimate result of ambition, the end to which every enterprise and labour tends, and of which every desire prompts the prosecution.”*

“True happiness is of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise; it arises, in the first place, from the enjoyment of one’s self, and, in the next, from the friendship and conversation of a few select companions; it loves shade and solitude, and naturally haunts groves and fountains, fields and meadows; in short, it feels every thing it wants within itself, and receives no addition from multitudes of witnesses and spectators.” †

“Oh knew he but his happiness, of men
The happiest he! who, far from public rage,
Deep in the vale, with a choice few retired,
Drinks the pure pleasures of the rural life.
Sure peace is his; a solid life, enstranged
To disappointment, and fallacious hope;
Health ever blooming; unambitious toil;
Calm contemplation, and poetic ease.”

THOMSON.

“For happiness and true philosophy
Are of the social, still, and smiling kind.”

Ibid.

“On the contrary, false happiness loves to be in a crowd and to draw the eyes of the world upon her. She does not receive any satisfaction from the applauses which she gives herself, but from the admiration which she raises in others. She flourishes in courts and palaces, theatres and assemblies, and has no existence but when she is looked upon!” ‡

“Be full ye courts, be great who will;
Search for peace with all your skill.

* Rambler.

† Addison.

‡ Spectator.

Open wide the lofty door,
 Seek her on the marble floor,
 In vain you search, she is not there ;
 In vain ye search, the domes of care !
 Grass and flowers Quiet treads,
 On the meads and mountain heads,
 Along with Pleasure, close allied,
 Ever by each other's side ;
 And often, by the murm'ring rill,
 Hears the thrush, while all is still."

DYER.

" Care selve beate,
 E voi solinghi e taciturni orrori
 Di riposo e di pace alberghi veri,
 O quanto volontieri
 A rivedervi io torni ! E se le stelle
 M' avesser dato in sorte
 Di vivere a me stessa, e di far vita
 Conforme alle mie voglie,
 Io già co' campi Elisi,
 Fortunato giardin de' Semidei,
 La vost' ombra gentil non cangerei." *

GUARINI.

" The fall of kings,
 The rage of nations, and the crush of states,
 Move not the man, who, from the world escaped,
 In still retreats, and flowery solitudes,
 To Nature's voice attends, from month to month,
 And day to day, through the revolving year.
 This is the life which those who fret in guilt,
 And guilty cities, never knew."

THOMSON.

" Rura mihi, et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes,
 Flumina amem sylvasque inglorius." †

VIRGIL.

* " O ye dear and blessed groves ! and ye lonely and silent solitudes ! the habitations of never-failing peace and tranquillity. O, how willingly do I turn to revisit you ! Did it please Fate to ordain that I were permitted to live according to my own wishes and inclination, I, most certainly, would not exchange your delightfully umbrageous haunts for even the gardens of felicity, inhabited by the immortal gods, the very Elysian Fields themselves."

† " My next desire is, void of care and strife,
 To lead a soft, secure, inglorious life.
 A country cottage near a crystal flood,
 A winding valley, and a lofty wood."

DRYDEN.



Thus, it is plain, that the ancients no less than the moderns; the poets as well as the writers in prose; whether they give us the language of the living or that of the dead, are, every one of them, for the calm, the tranquil, and the retired walk of life. The grand question then remaining is, to discover what are the resources and consolations best calculated to occupy and amuse us therein; and by what practicable means the current of human life may be made to flow in that smooth and placid manner, which it is so much the chief and ultimate wish of every one to enjoy.

To this very important question the author will take upon himself, bold as it may seem, to give an answer. In no one way, then, out of the innumerable roads which are so incessantly pursued, in order to arrive at this most desirable end, does it appear so likely to be found in that pure and unmixed state, without impediment or alloy, as in that which he has endeavoured with so much earnestness to recommend. It is, indeed, his firm opinion and belief, that, in the contemplation of nature, with a view to the pursuit of landscape painting, will be sought, with a more encouraging prospect of success than in almost any other way, that grand object of our anxious concern, “our very being’s end and aim,” *happiness*, as far, at least, as it is possible to be experienced in this transitory world.

For, in the first place, “Whatever purifies, fortifies the heart.”*

Now, that the pursuits under consideration purify and refine, the following observations will sufficiently evince, viz.

“Those whose natural feelings,” says a writer of established reputation, “have been properly improved by culture, nor yet have become callous by attrition with the world, know, from experience, how the heart is mollified, the manners polished, and the temper sweetened, by a well-directed study of the arts of imitation.”†

“Scilicet ingenium placida mollitur ab arte,
Et studiis mores convenienter eunt.”‡

OVID.

* Blair.

† Knock’s Essays.

‡ “Each pleasing art lends softness to the mind,
And with our studies are our lives refined.”

“It is certain,” observes Mr Hume, “that a serious attention to the sciences and liberal arts softens and humanises the temper, and cherishes the fine emotions in which true virtue and honour consist. It rarely, very rarely, happens, that a man of taste and learning is not at least an honest man, whatever frailties may attend him.” *

“Great wickedness, and great genius may have been united in the same person ; but it may be doubted whether corruption of heart and delicacy of taste be at all compatible.” †

“Nothing is so improving to the temper as the study of the beauties either of poetry, eloquence, music, or painting. They give a certain elegance of sentiment to which the rest of mankind are strangers. They draw off the mind from the hurry of business or interest ; and produce an agreeable melancholy, which, of all dispositions of the mind, is the best suited to love and friendship.” ‡

“Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.” §

OVID.

Such is the authority, besides many other similar quotations, which might be produced for proving that the arts purify and refine.

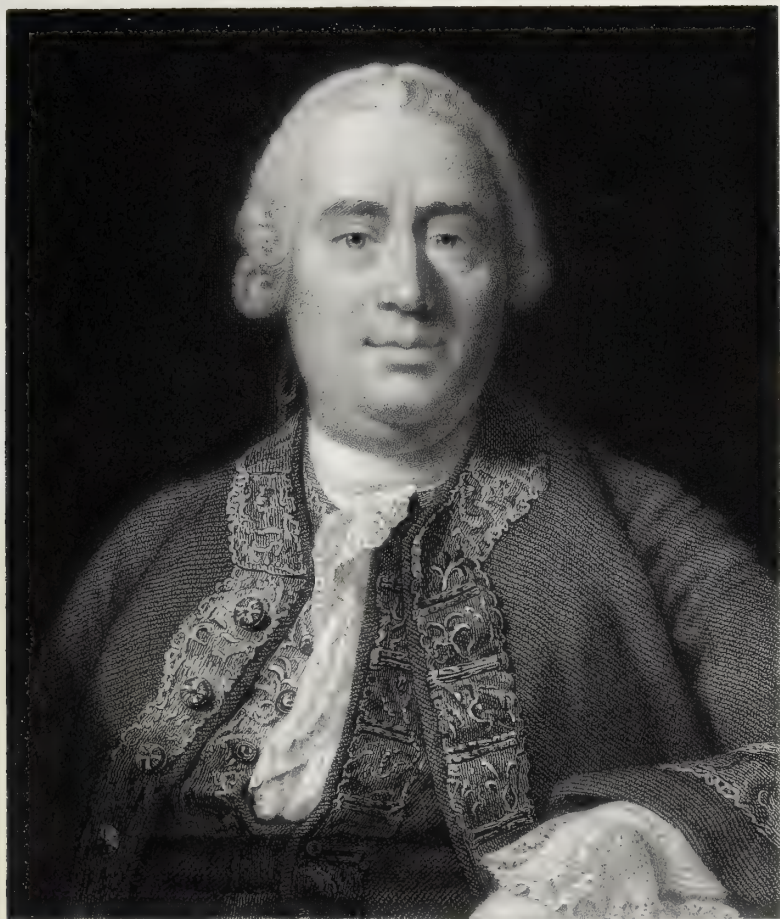
That those resources which they are capable of furnishing, fortify also the mind, it will be equally easy to show, provided the opinions of our very soundest philosophers are to be deemed worthy of belief. Having in the course of this undertaking adduced already so many arguments, supported by the authority of some of our ablest writers, in proof of the value and utility of the Fine Arts, it would seem almost needless to say more upon the subject. To show, however, that the author has it in his power to bring testimony of their salutary efficacy under the pressure of misfortune also, and that the

* Hume's Essays.

† Beattie's Essay on Poetry.

‡ Hume's Essays.

§ “To have learnt the liberal sciences thoroughly, softens much men's manners, and suffers them not to be brutal.”



Scott and Co. W. H. & Co.

DAVID HUME

pursuit of them is competent, very greatly, to fortify the mind against the calamities of life, he will, for the reader's satisfaction, produce the sentiments of one or two authors upon the subject, whose reputation is too well established to admit, for one moment, of a doubt.

“It is,” observes a writer of well known celebrity, “a common accusation against enthusiasm, that it is transitory; man were too much blessed if he could fix and retain emotions so delightful; but it is because they are so easily dissipated and lost that we should strive and exert ourselves to preserve them. Poetry and the Fine Arts are the means of calling forth in man this happiness of illustrious origin, which raises the depressed heart; and, instead of an unquiet satiety of life, gives an habitual feeling of the divine harmony, in which nature and ourselves claim a part.

“Days that are marked with a sad similarity by misfortune, or with a dull uniformity by irksomeness, furnish the man whose mind is employed by study with a great variety of incidents; his days are sweetly diversified from each other by the *different pleasures*, the possession of which his powers of thought have achieved; and what gives a peculiar and marked characteristic to this kind of enjoyment is, that the consciousness of having felt it in the evening, secures the repetition of it the next day.”*

Notwithstanding that the attention of the speaker when he made use of the admirable expressions which will presently be offered to the reader, was directed, it is true, to the contemplation of a different art, they appear, nevertheless, to be so singularly appropriate to that under consideration, of which, indeed, it is ever justly denominated the sister, the two being so very closely and intimately connected, that no apology can be necessary for introducing them. The words form part of a beautiful passage in the admirable oration of Cicero for his friend Archias the poet, a performance, by the way, which has done more for Archias than his own poetry; for,

* Madame de Stael.

in all probability, his name would, like his verses, have been forgotten, and he himself have been amongst those who

“ illacrymabiles
Urgentur, ignotique longa
Nocte,” *

had he not been immortalised by the eloquence of the Roman orator. The words alluded to run thus : — “ *Hæc studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solatium præbent; delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoscant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur.*” †

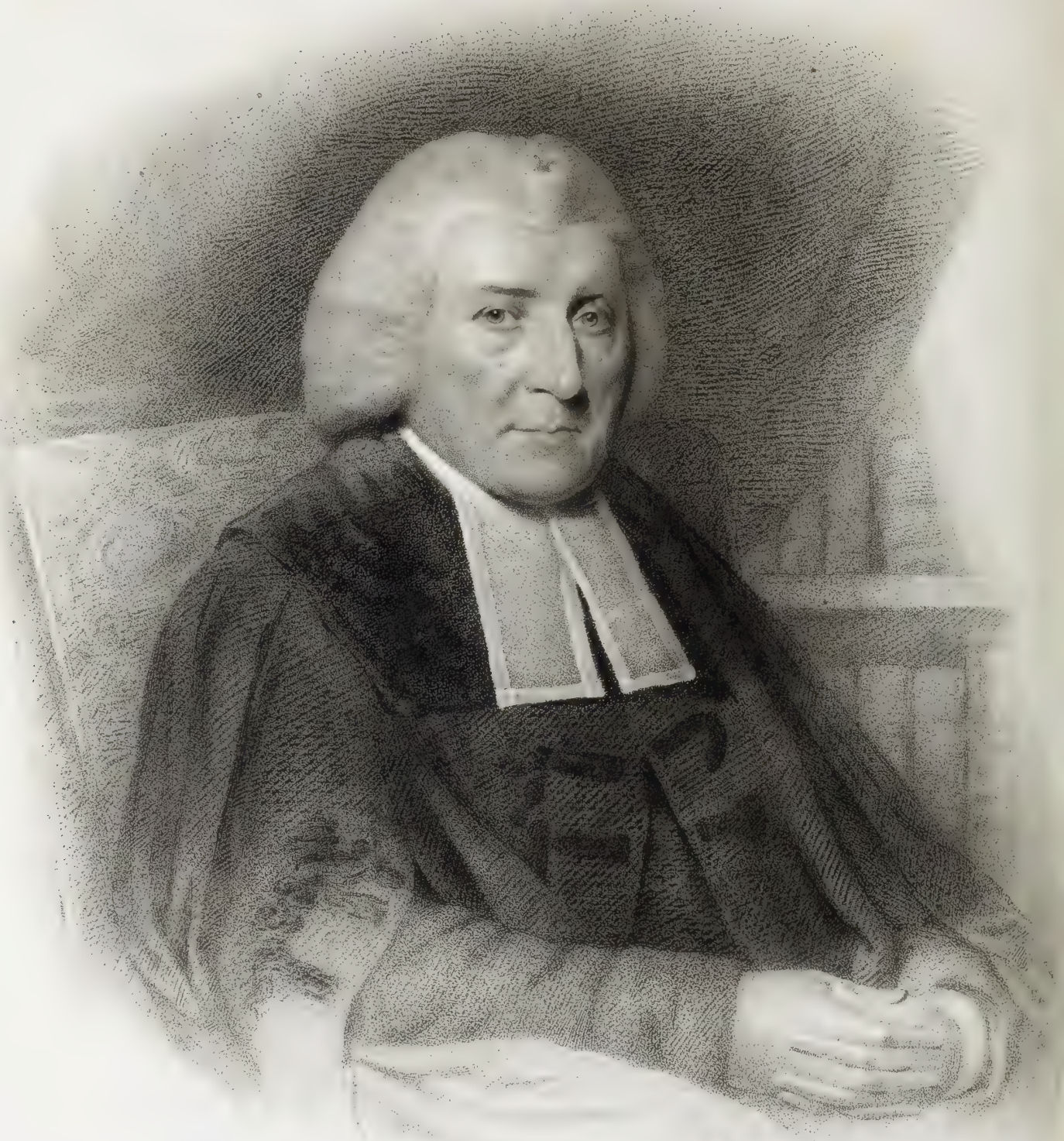
“ These resources,” observes a writer of the very highest celebrity, “ remain entire when the day of trouble comes. They remain with their possessor in sickness, as in health; in his dark and solitary hours, no less than when surrounded with friends and gay society. From the glare of prosperity he can, without dejection, withdraw into the shade. Excluded from several advantages of the world, he may be obliged to retreat into a narrower circle, but within that circle he will find these comforts left. His chief pleasures were of the calm, innocent, and temperate kind; and over these the changes of the world have the least power. His mind is a kingdom to him, and he can still enjoy it. The world did not bestow upon him all his enjoyments; and, therefore, it is not in the power of the world, by its most cruel attacks, to carry them all away.”

“ Look abroad into life,” continues this acute observer of mankind, “ and you will find the general sense of mankind bearing witness to this important truth, that mind is superior to fortune; and what one feels within, is of much greater importance than all

* “ In endless night they sleep, unwept, unknown.”

FRANCIS.

† Cicero. — “ These pursuits improve the mind in youth, and afford amusement in old age; they are an ornament to prosperity, and a refuge and a comfort in adversity; they are delightful to us when at home, and are no hindrance out of doors; they engage our attention even in the very darkness of night; they accompany us as well on our journeys, as in the retirements of a quiet country life.”



HUGH BLAIR, D.D.

From an original Picture by H. RAEBURN, ESQ. in the Possession of

SIR JOHN MACPHERSON, BART.

that befalls him without. Let a man be brought into some such severe and trying situation, as fixes the attention of the public on his behaviour. The first question which we put concerning him, is not, What does he suffer? but, How does he bear it? Has he a quiet mind? or, Does he appear to be unhappy within? If we judge him to be composed, firm, and resigned, his character rises, and his misery lessens in our view. We esteem and admire, rather than pity him.” *

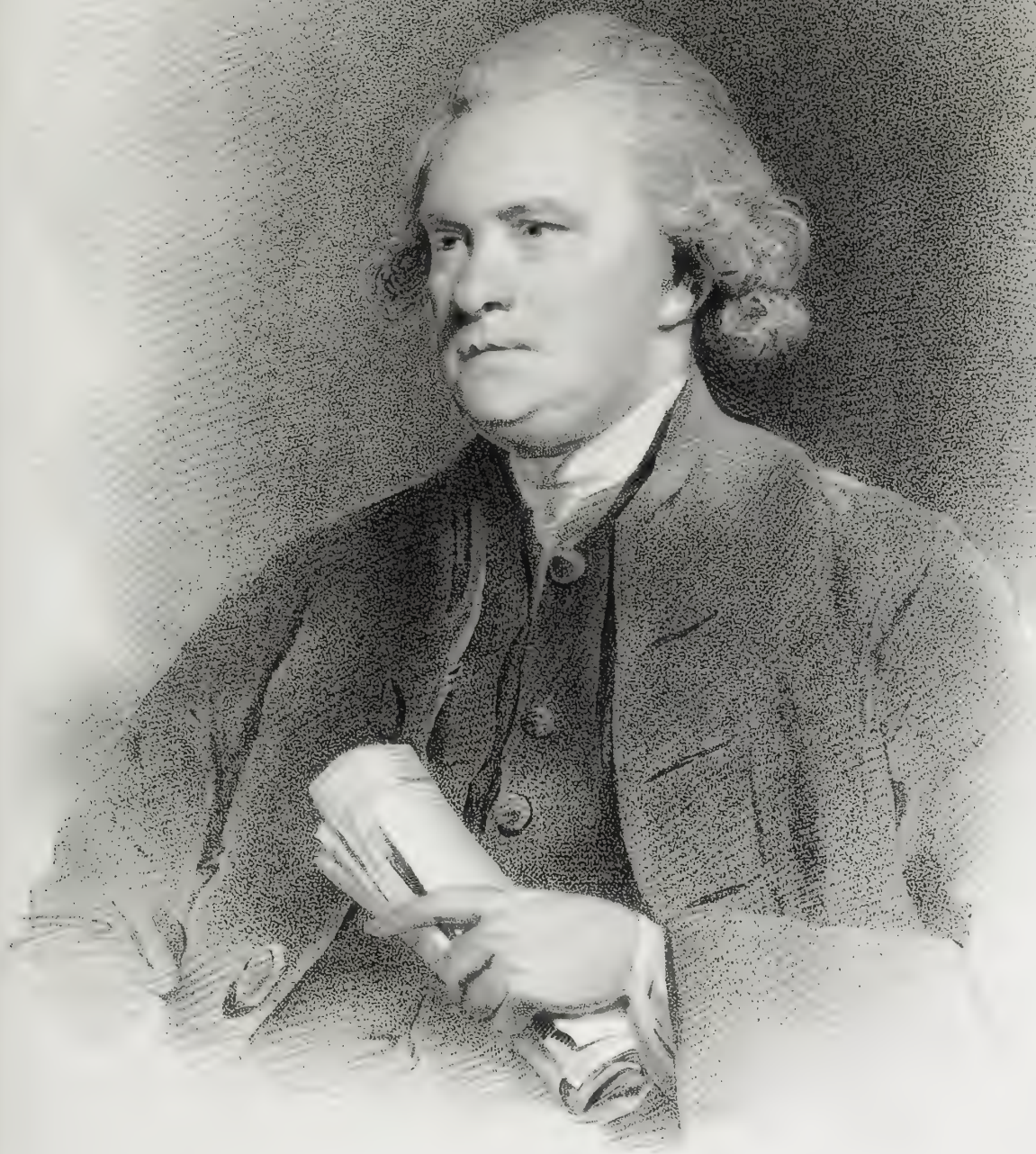
“ Delightful art ! how great thy friendly power,
That knows to cheer the melancholy hour ;
To teach at once the troubled mind to bear
Oppressive ills, and soften fell despair.”

It may possibly be objected, that the foregoing quotation from the works of a learned divine have a reference to objects of a nature essentially different from those at present under consideration, inasmuch as, in all probability, neither the study of nature, nor the fine arts, as a refuge under calamity, ever entered his head. To this the writer very readily joins his assent ; he must, however, at the same time be allowed to observe, that he considers these several objects as so inseparably connected with each other, that the one cannot be felt, at least in any material degree, without necessarily suggesting the other ; and that the road “ through nature, up to nature’s God,” is so direct and infallible, that, in following it, it is utterly impossible for the traveller to go astray. Thus, it would seem, that all he has been recommending about the study of nature and the cultivation of taste, is little else than another mode of preaching religion, and that of a very cheerful and rational kind.

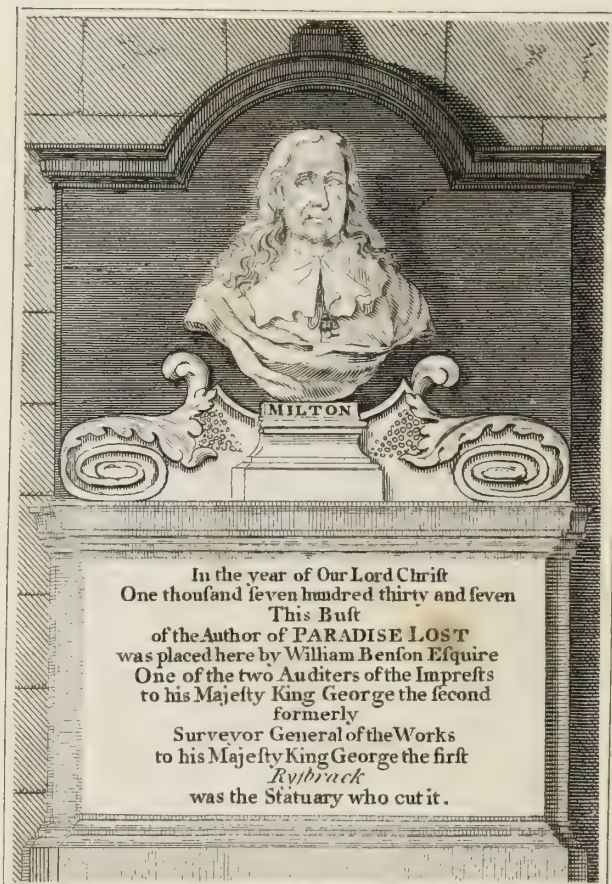
True, genuine religion, the author will venture to assert, must ever be found the inseparable companion of landscape painting ; that is to say, such a study of the art as is here meant to be understood ; and it is totally impossible that the one should be pursued, without not only prompting, but implanting and nourishing those sentiments

* Blair’s Sermons.

which the other inspires. Will the whole science of logic furnish a more scholastic syllogism than this? The love of nature is religion; painting is the love of nature; therefore, painting is religion. Milton, Gray, Thomson, Cowper, Beattie, Mason, were, every one of them, painters in this sense of the word; and, at the same time, in consequence, in a great measure, of being so, deeply impressed with the sacred truths of our most holy religion, as their respective works, together with the biography of each of them, sufficiently testify.



THE REV. WILLIAM MASON, M.A.



In the year of Our Lord Christ
One thousand seven hundred thirty and seven
This Bust

of the Author of **PARADISE LOST**
was placed here by William Benson Esquire
One of the two Auditors of the Imprests
to his Majesty King George the second
formerly

Surveyor General of the Works
to his Majesty King George the first
Rybrack
was the Statuary who cut it.

CHAP. III.

SCEPTICISM. — RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM. — RATIONAL RELIGION. — CHEERFULNESS, THE COMPANION OF THE LOVER OF NATURE. — THE AUTHOR'S RELIGION. — DIFFICULTY OF JUDGING OF THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS. — NO HAPPINESS WITHOUT TRANQUILLITY OF MIND. — STUDY OF NATURE AND LANDSCAPE PAINTING HIGHLY CONDUCIVE THERETO. — THESE PURSUITS NEVER-FAILING RESOURCES UNDER CALAMITY. — EXAMPLE IN PROOF. — ANECDOTE OF THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH. — PLEASURE AND ADVANTAGES TO BE DERIVED FROM THE STUDY OF PAINTING.

A RELIGION, such as that described in the foregoing chapter, cannot fail to prove at once a rational, a cheerful, and a comfortable religion, acceptable in the sight of Heaven, and calculated to promote the happiness of the individual, while it tends to establish the peace and harmony of society. It opens the direct path which leads to happiness, avoiding on the one hand the bewildering mazes of scepticism, and on the other, the no less perilous errors of enthusiasm. Yet how few, even in this enlightened age, can pursue that middle course, without occasionally deviating into one or other of the two extremes !

In the higher and more intellectual ranks of society, it is to be feared that there is too prevalent a disposition to reject those truths which the common feelings of mankind have for ages venerated as sacred, and to indulge in speculations which lead from perplexity to perplexity, and only terminate in doubt. Those among them who take the lead in public opinion, and have become eminent for the boldness or ingenuity of their theories, are little to be envied for such distinction: they may be said to resemble that class of rebellious spirits whom Milton mentions as separated from "the common damned" only by the refinement of their misery :

" Others, apart, sat on a hill retired,
Of thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate,
Fixt Fate, Free Will, Foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost."

It is remarkable that this speculative philosophy, as it is called, which in former times was to be found only in the works of such saturnine sages as Helvetius and Mirabaud, should have arrayed itself in the attractive garniture of poetry. The present age has produced men of high endowments and higher pretensions, who, while avowing the profoundest admiration of "this goodly frame, the world,"—"this brave o'erhanging firmament," have either denied it to be the work of an Intelligent Being, or have supposed that Being to delight more in evil than in good. It might not, perhaps, be easy to adduce an instance in which the love and admiration of Nature's works were more deeply felt or more justly appreciated, than that of a late celebrated poet, whose powers of description have rarely been surpassed. Yet in the full display of those powers we see no indication of gratitude towards the Giver of them, none of those expressions of ardent piety which glow in the works of our earlier poets. We cannot imagine that the mind of Lord Byron was incapable of so exalted a feeling, yet we are constrained to believe that it was one which he took no delight in cherishing. The absence of it constitutes the great defect of his poetry, because it excites a bitter and now unavailing regret that he should not have applied his great powers to their worthiest use. Notwithstanding his splendid genius, he will be remembered chiefly as a satirist, and it is to be feared that his efforts in this capacity have only confirmed the faults which they might have been intended to expose and to correct. Amidst the general applause which he commands, it is not to be denied that his works are quoted with exultation by the libertine, the sceptic, and the atheist.

With respect to the other extreme which has been mentioned, it may be observed, that the evils which attend it are not less to be lamented because those who suffer from them are objects rather of pity than of censure. Religious enthusiasm, at least that species of it which creates habitual gloom of mind and austerity of life, may be said to defeat the purposes for which religion was instituted, since in some cases it diminishes, and in others absolutely annihilates the



LORD BYRON

power of doing good. Contrition for past offences we are told, is only the beginning of that wisdom whose ulterior paths are pleasantness, and whose ways are peace. After that wholesome repentance which produces amendment of life, the habit most consonant to a mind which has entered upon the practice of its duties is cheerfulness. The most grateful homage to the Creator is temperately to enjoy and freely to diffuse the blessings which he has placed at our disposal. The fountains of hope and joy from which that animating principle is derived, are perennial; they are closed only against those who wilfully reject the consolations of religion, or live in the habitual violation of its duties. "The vicious man and the atheist," says Addison, "have therefore no pretence to cheerfulness, and would act very unreasonably should they endeavour after it. It is impossible for any one to live in good humour, and enjoy his present existence, who is apprehensive either of torment or annihilation; of being miserable, or of not being at all. After having mentioned these two great principles which are destructive of cheerfulness in their own nature as well as in right reason, I cannot think of any other that ought to banish this happy temper from a virtuous mind. Pain and sickness, shame and reproach, poverty and old age, nay, death itself, considering the shortness of their duration and the advantages we may reap from them, do not deserve the name of evils; a good man may bear up under them with fortitude, with constancy, and with cheerfulness of heart. The tossing of a tempest does not discompose him who is sure that it will bring him to a joyful harbour.

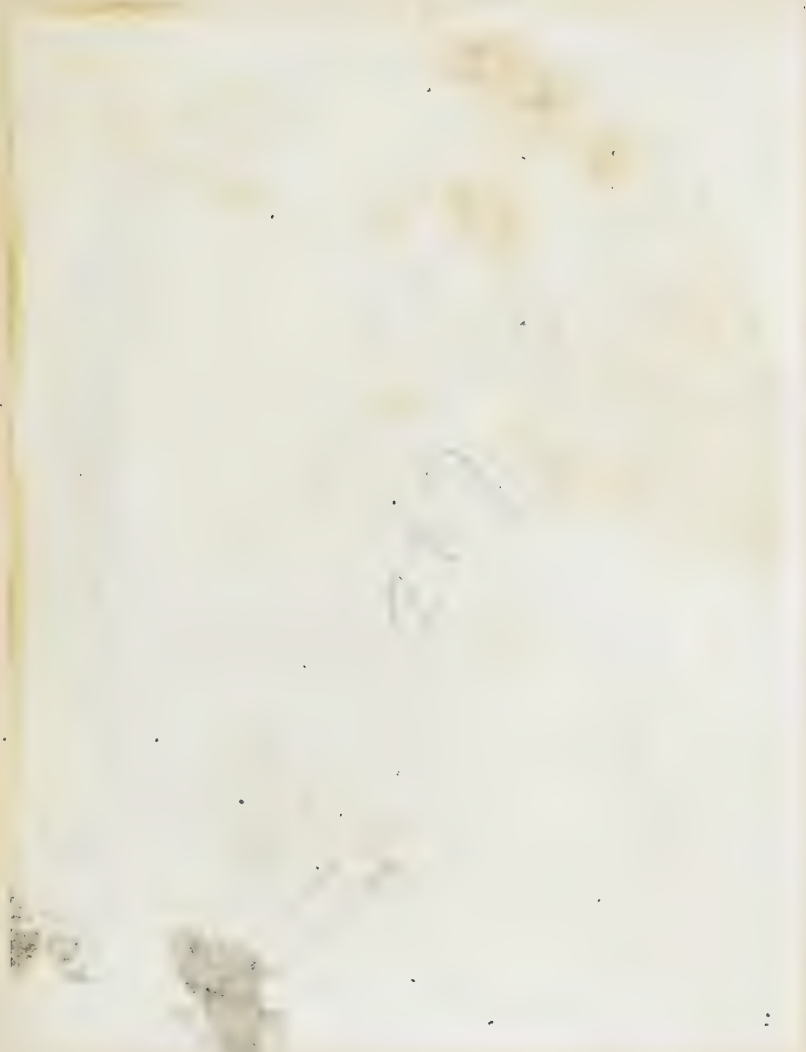
"A man who uses his best endeavours to live according to the dictates of virtue and right reason, has two perpetual sources of cheerfulness in the consideration of his own nature, and of that Being on whom he has a dependence. If he looks into himself he cannot but rejoice in that existence which is so lately bestowed upon him, and which, after millions of ages, will still be new, and still in its beginning. How many self-congratulations naturally rise in the mind, when it reflects on its entrance into eternity, when it takes a view of

those improvable faculties which in a few years have made so considerable a progress, and which will still be receiving an increase of perfection, and consequently an increase of happiness ! The second source of cheerfulness to a good mind, is the consideration that the Being who bestows this happiness will continue it to all eternity."

After the arguments which have been advanced, there can be little ground for doubting that the religion above described, and of which the study and contemplation of nature form so essential a part, has the power of enabling its votaries to derive support and consolation under the very heaviest misfortunes ; such, and so undeniable, is the concurrent testimony which the writings of our sages and most esteemed moralists afford.

Nevertheless, as it is allowed, on all hands, that example is more powerful than precept ; and as the author is of opinion that one single fact, which can fairly be proved as the result of practice and experience, alone is worth all the theory and assertion that ever were penned ; and being, likewise, desirous of pointing out, for the benefit of others, the peculiar advantages which, among so many, are unquestionably afforded, in cases especially of calamity and distress, by means of those valuable resources which are derived from the love and study of Nature, with a view to that rational and contemplative enjoyment of her works, and, in a still greater degree, from the copying of them ; he will, in order to exhibit the matter in the most obvious and striking point of view, venture, however reluctantly, to make mention of circumstances which have reference to himself alone : such being the only way, as he conceives, in which any satisfactory example of the kind can be produced, since it is impossible for any one to speak, at least with the smallest degree of certainty, especially in a case of this nature, respecting the feelings and the disposition of any other person than his own individual self.

Very far, indeed, from agreeable to his feelings, and thoroughly uninteresting to any one else, would it be, were the writer to enter upon the history of himself, concerning which too much, perhaps, has already been said. He will, therefore, in the mention of what is





Madame G. Warron de St. L.

about to be adduced in support of his argument, refrain from any thing connected with it, beyond what his object requires.

Whether under similar circumstances, resources equally valuable are to be obtained by other means, it would be little else than useless to enquire, as any investigation of the kind must prove, at best, extremely vague and inconclusive, without, at the same time, offering the least profitable end.

That the pleasures which poetry and the pursuits of literature and science hold out are capable, in a very high degree, of alleviating the cares and anxieties of life, and are therefore, on that account alone, very justly entitled to our esteem, the biography of many excellent and illustrious characters unquestionably proves. The resources, indeed, which such pursuits, at all times, afford, have ever been deservedly ranked among the most valuable enjoyments of life; notwithstanding which, it is very much to be doubted whether even the refined and substantial gratifications which these most valuable intellectual amusements are able to furnish, have it in their power to excite, in any proportionable degree, that delightful and almost unceasing enthusiasm described by Madame de Stael, or to produce so entire, uninterrupted, and independent an enjoyment—an enjoyment which is felt, whether at home or abroad, within doors or without, in sickness as in health,—as those which, under every circumstance of life, with scarcely an exception, are experienced by the sincere and ardent votaries of nature and taste.

Any enquiry, however, of the kind is of little importance, and can have nothing to do with the object in view. It will be sufficient for the present purpose, if it can be made to appear where, and in what manner, resources so valuable are actually to be found. This is the only question in which the writer is concerned, and he leaves it for others to judge, whether the search after them is worthy of all that attention and labour (if a pleasurable pursuit can be so termed) which their acquisition demands, and without which they certainly can in no wise be obtained.

Whatever may be the case, in regard to the feelings and opinions of others, and however difficult it may be to form even a probable conjecture respecting them, the author conceives that he may very safely, and without fear of mistake, confidently pronounce upon the sentiments and propensities which belong to himself; as well as upon the operation of that power of the mind by which, as experience has taught him, its emotions are governed and subdued; and in the due regulation of which our chief comfort and happiness so entirely depend. Of this he feels perfectly sure.

Under this impression, therefore, it is, that he is now bold enough, however extraordinary it may appear, to adduce himself as an example, in proof of the efficacy of that remedy under affliction he so earnestly recommends.

In order that a more just idea may be formed of the nature and extent of the misfortune alluded to, and the present calamitous situation of the author, and from which, only, any decisive judgment can be deduced as to the value and power of the aid which has been applied, he will contrast with it the opposite character of that happiness which it was previously his good fortune to enjoy. For, as it is from comparison only that a true estimate can be made of what constitutes either good or bad fortune, commonly so called, the latter being, not unfrequently, with many persons, what by others would be contemplated as directly the reverse, it ensues that no man's loss can be fairly appreciated, until the value of that of which he has been deprived is first ascertained.

Considering, then, the matter in this point of view, the writer will, before adverting to the nature of his privation, endeavour to draw a slight sketch of some of the principal features which the more agreeable side of the picture displays, from which the reader may be able to form an opinion how far his is a calamity, which it requires the very utmost fortitude and resignation to bear.

To have the current of life running at all times unruffled and smooth, is what never yet happened to any person, however great his prosperity or good fortune, and would, indeed, were that state possi-

ble, prove, most assuredly, insipid enough ; “ *toujours perdrix **,” we all know, will very soon cloy ; and human life, to be happy, must be varied, and necessarily made up of the bitter, as well as the sweets, of its condition.

It is, therefore, wisely ordained, that the pleasures we experience should be tempered with an occasional mixture of pain, which acting, in some measure, as a contrast, both heightens and improves our enjoyments ; like the cloud which, towards sunset, we have seen awhile dim the ether, when retired leaves it more bright and serene.

First of all, then, the author can without the slightest hesitation declare, that were fate to ordain that his former days should be passed over again, there is scarcely a single alteration that he could wish to be effected therein ; so uniformly tranquil, agreeable, and fortunate has been, till lately, his very enviable career.

Did it ever fall to the lot of human being to enjoy that singularly rare and fortunate union, so emphatically described by Madame de Stael, and which it requires the concurrence of so many favourable circumstances to produce, it was, assuredly, experienced by himself.

“ If,” says this writer, “ there are in the universe two beings united by a perfect sentiment of love, and should marriage have bound them to each other, every day on their knees let them bless the Supreme Being. Let them look down on the universe and its greatness. Let them view with astonishment, let them cherish with anxiety, a happiness which so many accidents must have concurred to bestow ; a happiness which places them at such an infinite distance from the rest of mankind.” † Added to this, health, “ an elegant sufficiency,” content, children, society, pictures, and a residence as enviable as can well be conceived. Blessed, in short, on all sides and in every imaginable way, while every wish was gratified, and every comfort supplied, he had it in his power with equal truth and exult-

* “ Partridges every day.”

† Madame de Stael.

ation to exclaim, in almost the very words of our interesting and amiable poet,

“ Had I the choice of sublunary good,
What would I wish that I possess not here ;
Friends, books, a garden, pencil, and a pen ;
Delightful industry enjoy’d at home,
And Nature in her cultivated trim,
Dress’d to my taste, inviting me abroad ;
Where I enjoyed,
With her who shared my pleasures and my heart,
Sweet converse.”

COWPER.

What, in heaven’s name, could mortal wish for beside ? Such has been one side of the picture.

How fine, how delicate, are the threads upon the strength and perfection of which human happiness depends ! Without painting the reverse, suffice it to say, that the cup of felicity has been dashed to the ground, and where pleasure and enjoyment found residence, affliction and misfortune have taken their stand. It is but another instance of the acknowledged instability of all human felicity ; to complain were worse than useless ; the only question, therefore, remaining is, how to bear, with becoming fortitude, the melancholy change.

This brings the author to the point he has had principally in view in this singular “ confession,” and which is to assure the reader, that there are no calamities, misfortunes, or afflictions that may not be very greatly mitigated and supported by the help of the resources in question ; in order to prove the truth of which, he does not scruple to offer an example of the most undeniable kind ; the only one, perhaps, which, in such a case, it can ever be in the power of any person to produce ; viz. the example afforded in himself.

For he can, with the greatest truth, declare, that whatever may, at any time, have been the acuteness of his feelings, under a trial so severe, and “ he hath that within that passeth show ;” let him have been ever so miserable, it has invariably been found that the aspect of nature, with green trees, a fine sky, and a smiling landscape

around ; or, what amounts nearly to the very same thing, the contemplation of one of those beautiful, sublime, and enchanting Wilsons (never to be sufficiently admired) which it is his good fortune to possess ; in no one instance have objects such as these, which the oftener they are observed the more will their beauties be felt, ever failed, by their magical influence, almost instantaneously to mitigate his sorrow, to soothe his depressed spirits, and to tranquillise his mind. At all times, indeed, and on every occasion, he has uniformly experienced, that

“ Nature, divinely drest
In rich attire,
Wakes, with her music, in the breast
A softer glow,
And makes the soul respire
A purer bliss than all below.” *

That this is no exaggeration the reader may rest assured ; it is an advantage to be experienced by all who, with the aid of study and adequate cultivation, are possessed of the means whereby its acquaintance is made. One essential benefit arising from this resource, always within reach, and continually at hand, is, that the tranquillising effect it produces is not merely momentary, and such as only occasionally occurs. The consoling influence here spoken of is, on the contrary, uniform, and felt every day. Such, indeed, and so effective has the author found to be its assuasive and sovereign power, that he is convinced when once it is thoroughly established in the mind, there is nothing, however oppressive or disheartening, which is able either to subdue it or to drive it away. Other resources and other palliatives, doubtless, there may be, and which, at times, and under favourable circumstances, may prove efficacious enough ; but where, let it be asked, shall we find a ready, never-failing balm, and an alleviation like this ? The resources, in fine, and enjoyments, which the study and contemplation of nature afford, are proof against every attack,

* Blackwood's Magazine, April, 1821.

and defy the utmost disasters (loss of eyesight, perhaps, only excepted) which misfortune can bring in her train.

“ I care not, Fortune, what you me deny :
 You cannot rob me of free Nature’s grace ;
 You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
 Through which Aurora shows her brightening face ;
 You cannot bar my constant feet to trace
 The woods and lawns, by living streams, at eve.”

Castle of Indolence.

There is, perhaps, no one single occupation or employment which is so thoroughly independent of weather and seasons, or which is capable of affording such real enjoyment within doors, as the pursuit under consideration. Though thousands will disbelieve it, it is no less matter of fact, that the delight which the lover of nature experiences in the prospect of luxuriant woods and smiling fields, infinitely exceeds any which can be felt by him who contemplates them with no other gratification than what arises from the reflection, with many the only agreeable reflection belonging to the sight of them, that they are his own property ; even though there be added to it the fond and sanguine anticipation of those gains which their fertility seems likely to ensure to their happy possessor. Rain or storms, frost or snow, affect not the man whose imagination luxuriates amid verdant lawns and summer suns, and who, placed before the landscape which himself has created, enjoys a far greater pleasure in his imitation than others experience from the reality. Had our poet obtained his wish of being the philosopher he describes, he could never have been one half so happy as the landscape painter.

“ We are rational,” says Cowper, in one of his letters, “ but we are animal too, and, therefore, subject to the influences of the weather. Upon this account I have sometimes wished myself a philosopher. How happy, in comparison with myself, does the sagacious investigator of nature seem, whose fancy is ever employed in the invention of *hypotheses*, and his reason in the support of them ! While he is accounting for the origin of the winds, he has no leisure to attend to



Portrait of Sir Isaac Newton

Portrait of Sir Isaac Newton

Portrait of Sir Isaac Newton
in the gallery of the Royal Society

Portrait of Sir Isaac Newton

Portrait of Sir Isaac Newton

their influence upon himself; and while he considers what the sun is made of, forgets that he has not shone for a month. One project, indeed, supplants another. The *vortices* of Descartes gave way to the gravitation of Newton, and this again is threatened by the electrical fluid of a modern. One generation blows bubbles, and the next breaks them. But in the mean time your philosopher is a happy man. He escapes a thousand inquietudes to which the indolent are subject, and finds his occupation, whether it be the pursuit of a butterfly or a demonstration, the wholesomest exercise in the world. As he proceeds, he applauds himself. His discoveries, though eventually, perhaps, they prove but dreams, are to him realities. The world gaze at him, as he does at a new phenomenon in the heavens, and, perhaps, understand him as little. But this does not prevent their praises, nor at all disturb him in the enjoyment of that self-complacence, to which his imaginary success entitles him. He wears his honours while he lives, and if another strips them off when he has been dead a century, it is no great matter; he can then make shift without them.”*

What eulogium, then, may it be asked, can appear too great, or how is it possible to speak in sufficiently high terms of a pursuit which is capable of producing effects so enviable and so inestimable; or, in the comparison of which, what is there that this world, with all its boasted allurements, can possibly afford? Riches, honours, fame, whatever advantages in themselves they may be thought to possess, will be found of little worth, so long as their owners feel the want of that necessary and invaluable sweetener of them all, tranquillity of mind; in the absence of which, neither relish or enjoyment, under any circumstances, however prosperous or favourable, can ever be found. Deprived of that, it matters not whether a man be in youth or in age, at home or abroad, in the country or in town; his *mind* remains invariably the same; and upon it only, after all, must the chief of his happiness depend.

* Hayley's Life of Cowper.

“ *Cœlum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.*”* HORACE.

They may go where they will, it is ever and in all situations the same ; and in vain will that be sought for without, which the wanderer feels not himself possessed of within.

Whereas, to him who, by an attentive study and cultivation of the pursuits under consideration, has acquired the power of creating at all times, and upon every occasion, resources thus productive of amusement, of consolation, and relief, and who feels within his own mind their delightful and animating effects, it matters not where, or under what circumstances, how adverse soever, he may be placed ; he feels confidently assured he shall experience the countenance and favour of the mistress he adores.

“ *Pone me, pigris ubi nulla campis
Arbor æstivâ recreatur aurâ ;
Quod latus mundi nebulæ, malusque
Jupiter urget :*

“ *Pone sub curru nimium propinqui
Solis, in terrâ domibus negatâ ;
Dulcè ridentem Lalagen amabo,
Dulcè loquentem.*”†

HORACE.

Again, then, let me recommend to every one who is in quest of a substantial, independent, and never-failing resource under every circumstance of life, (to the young, in a more especial manner, I would address myself,) to cultivate a serious attention to an admonition, at

* “ They that beyond sea go will sadly find
They change their climate, not their mind.” CREECH.

† “ Place me where never summer breeze
Unbinds the glebe, or warms the trees ;
Where ever low’ring clouds appear,
And angry Jove deforms th’ inclement year :

“ Place me beneath the burning ray,
Where rolls the rapid car of day ;
Love and the nymph shall charm my toils,
The nymph who sweetly speaks and sweetly smiles.” FRANCIS.

once the most profitable and momentous that ever was penned:—Contemplate, study, and “remember, now,” the sublime and beautiful works of thy “Creator, in the days of thy youth, that the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”

Though the reflections naturally suggested by the mention of the foregoing circumstances have been of a very serious nature, and sufficient, it might be thought, to molest the even tenor of his way, the author is, nevertheless, prepared to go cheerfully on. Life is a journey that must, whether we like it or not, be performed by us all; and belonging to which there are many offices and duties demanding our attention and care, let us be travelling either along the smooth or the rough part of the way. There is, in fact, no standing still in the progress we are making to the grave, and we are compelled to go on, happen what may. Fortunate, indeed, for him will it be, who can, at the end of it, look back with the satisfaction of finding those duties and those offices fulfilled.

When Colonel Binfield was shot by the side of the Duke of Marlborough, it is reported that the Duke stopped and dropped a tear over him, when, after some pause, turning to those about him, he said, “But, gentlemen, we must go forward.” And so, courteous reader, must we.

Among the various writers who have made the fine arts the object of their enquiry, no one seems to have felt in a greater degree the importance of their cultivation, or to have been more alive to the pleasure and advantages to be derived from them, than the well-known Richardson. The excellent remarks contained in his work, and the arguments which he uses in proof of the utility and value of pictures, are conveyed with so much judgment and animation, and are known to have had so powerful an effect, that the subject cannot, perhaps, be introduced in a better or more appropriate manner, than by laying before the reader a few of that author’s sentiments.

It was, we are told, the perusal of Richardson’s Essay on the

Theory of Painting, that “excited the first fondness for his art in Sir Joshua Reynolds*,” and which “so inflamed his mind, that Raffaele appeared to him superior to the most illustrious names of antiquity or modern times ; a notion,” says his biographer, “which he loved to indulge all the rest of his life.” †

“Because pictures,” observes the author referred to, “are universally delightful, and accordingly made one part of our ornamental furniture, many, I believe, consider the art of *painting* but as a pleasing superfluity ; at best, that it holds but a low rank with respect to its *usefulness* to mankind.

“If there was, in reality, no more in it than an innocent amusement ; if it were only one of those sweets that the Divine Providence has bestowed on us, to render the good of our present being superior to the evil of it ; or whether it be or no, to render life somewhat more eligible, it ought to be considered as a bounty from Heaven, and to hold a place in our esteem accordingly. Pleasure, however it be depreciated, is what we all eagerly and incessantly pursue ; and when innocent, and consequently a divine benefaction, is to be considered in that view, and as an ingredient in human life which the supreme wisdom has judged necessary.

“Painting is that pleasant, innocent amusement, and as such it holds its place among our enjoyments. But it is more, it is of great use, as being one of the means whereby we convey our ideas to each other, and which, in some respects, has the advantage of all the rest. And thus it must be ranked with these, and accordingly esteemed not only as an enjoyment, but as another language, which completes the whole art of communicating our thoughts ; one of those particulars which raises the dignity of human nature so much above the brutes, and which is the more considerable, as being a gift bestowed but upon a few even of our own species.

“The pleasure that painting, as a dumb art, gives us, is like what we have from music ; its beautiful forms, colours, and harmony, are

* Johnson’s Life of Cowley.

† Malone’s Life of Reynolds.

to the eye, what sounds and the harmony of that kind are to the ear ; and in both we are delighted in observing the skill of the artist, in proportion to it, and our own judgment to discover it. It is this beauty and harmony which gives so much pleasure at the sight of natural pictures, a prospect, a fine sky, a garden, &c., and the copies of these, which renew the ideas of them, are consequently pleasant : thus, we see spring, summer, and autumn, in the depth of winter ; and frost and snow, if we please, when the dog-star rages. Nor do we barely see this variety of natural objects, but in good pictures we always see nature improved, or, at least, the best choice of it. We have thus nobler and finer ideas of men, animals, landscapes, &c. than we should, perhaps, have ever had. We see particular accidents and beauties which are rarely or never seen by us ; and this is no inconsiderable addition to the pleasure.

“ I will add one article more in praise of this noble, delightful, and useful art, and that is this : the treasure of a nation consists in the pure productions of nature, or those managed or put together and improved by art : now, there is no artificer whatsoever that produces so valuable a thing from such inconsiderable materials of nature’s furnishing as the painter ; putting the time (for that also must be considered as one of those materials) into the account, it is next to creation. This nation is many thousands of pounds the richer for Van Dyck’s hand, and which is as current money as gold in most parts of Europe, and this with an inconsiderable expense of the productions of nature : what a treasure, then, have all the great masters here and elsewhere given to the world !

“ How great a variety soever there may be in men’s tastes of pleasure, and what unhappy mixtures soever they may make, this will be generally allowed to be delightful. And there is one particular which I will remark, because I believe it is not commonly taken notice of, and this is the vast advantage the sight has above the other senses with respect to pleasure. Those receive it, but it is by starts and flashes, with long insipid intervals, and frequently worse ; but the pleasures of the eye are like those of heaven, perpe-

tual, and without satiety ; and if offensive objects appear, we can reject them in a moment." *

The subject being one that the writer has much at heart, he will venture to introduce some additional remarks which have struck him as being worthy of notice, and which, like the preceding, are borrowed from the works of others.

There are, indeed, many excellent authors who have expressed their sentiments upon this particular, and not a few who have devoted very considerable time and labour in their endeavours to point out the pleasure and advantages to be derived from the study of the fine arts.

Considering that such valuable observations are not unfrequently interspersed among matter relating to other topics, and do not, therefore, so readily present themselves, some little service may, perhaps, be done to the cause, by bringing a few of them into a narrower compass for the reader's assistance ; especially as the author would lament that any argument should be omitted, which might, in the slightest degree, contribute to exhibit the subject in the clearest and most advantageous light.

As the opinions about to be offered have been expressed by men of experience and known celebrity, they cannot fail to carry with them a far greater degree of weight than any which the writer could, of himself, advance ; he prefers, therefore, rather risking the imputation of being thought over-liberal in quotations, than forego advantages so signal, and will, accordingly, without further apology, produce them.

" It is agreed on all hands," observes Mr. Hume, " that a delicate and refined taste must always be a desirable quality, because it is the source of all the finest and most innocent enjoyments of which human nature is susceptible. In this decision the sentiments of all mankind are agreed. Whenever you can ascertain a delicacy of taste it is sure to meet with approbation." †

* Richardson's Theory of Painting.

† Hume's Essays.

“ A man of polite imagination,” the author of the *Spectator* very justly remarks, “ is let into a great many pleasures that the vulgar are not capable of receiving. He can converse with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a statue ; he meets with a secret refreshment in a description, and often feels a greater satisfaction in the prospect of fields and meadows than another does in the possession of them ; it gives him a kind of property in every thing he sees, and makes the most rude and uncultivated parts of nature administer to his pleasures, so that he looks on the world, as it were, in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms that conceal themselves from the rest of mankind.”*

“ This sensibility to the pleasures of imagination, when judiciously managed, adds much to the happiness of life, and it must be particularly advantageous to those who, by their stations in society, are precluded from the necessity of manual labour. Mental exertions and mental amusements are essential to those persons in the higher ranks of society, who wish to escape from the fever of dissipation or the lethargy of *ennui* !” †

“ The dissipated, the needy, and the industrious, are apt to imagine that the idle and the rich are the chosen favourites of heaven, and that they alone possess what all mankind are equally anxious to attain ; but supposing always a decent competency, the genuine source of happiness is virtuous employment, pursued with ardour, and regulated by our own choice.” ‡

“ The more our ideas are increased, or our conceptions extended upon any subject, and the greater the number of associations we connect with it, the stronger is the emotion of sublimity or beauty we receive from it. The pleasure, for instance, which the generality of mankind receive from any celebrated painting is trifling when compared to that which a painter feels if he is a man of a common degree of candour. What is to them only an accurate representation of nature, is to him a beautiful exertion of genius, and a perfect

* Addison. † Dagley's Compendium. ‡ Malone's Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

display of art. The difficulties which occur to his mind in the design and execution of such a performance, and the testimonies of skill, of taste, and of invention, which the accomplishment of it exhibit, excite a variety of emotions in his breast of which the common spectator is altogether unsusceptible; and the admiration with which he thus contemplates the genius and art of the painter, blends itself with the peculiar emotions which the picture itself can produce, and enhances to him every beauty that it may possess.

“The beauty of any scene in nature is seldom so striking to others as it is to a landscape painter. The difficulties both of invention and execution, which, from his profession, are familiar to him, render the profusion with which nature often scatters the most picturesque beauties little less than miraculous. Every little circumstance of form, and perspective, and light, and shade, which are unnoticed by a common eye, are important in his, and mingling in his mind ideas of difficulty and facility in overcoming it, produce altogether an emotion of delight, incomparably more animated than any that the generality of mankind usually derive from it.”*

That the study recommended affords not only *pleasure*, but that it is

“Friendly to the best pursuits of man,
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,”

COWPER.

and is advantageous in every point of view, the writer proceeds to show from authority equally undoubted.

“In recommending the knowledge and practice of painting, it may be observed,” says a late writer, “that upon the general theatre of life few can stand conspicuous; to impart interest, therefore, to objects and incidents within our reach, to every-day occurrences, is an acquisition well worth our pains; since years are often spent in acquiring wealth which eventually cannot be enjoyed for want of

* Alison on Taste.

those stores of the mind that should have been laid up in youth, as the best solace of declining years.

“For, without being a poet or an orator, a man may have a sufficient degree of imagination to receive pleasure from the labour of others ; he may be a critical judge of the respective merits of orators, poets, and artists.

“It has been a subject of deep and continued regret to many in an advanced period of life, that drawing had not formed a part of their education ; the most moderate power of making a sketch from nature would have been a valuable attainment, when leisure and opportunity threw them upon scenes they could but half enjoy, or in company where they could not join in the pleasures derived from conversation on works of art.” *

The arts have not only an influence on our manners, but also on our passions, and, taken in a national point of view, are highly useful. The pictures representing gallant actions, or noble achievements, rouse and stimulate to acts of heroism and public spirit ; while those of a more elegant turn exhibit examples of graceful address, and incline the mind to acts of beneficence and virtue.

Drawing is not only an accomplishment the most elegant, agreeable, and ornamental, but, at the same time that it is the foundation of painting, is of the utmost utility to the sculptor, the civil and naval architect, the engraver, the engineer, the mathematician, and navigator. To it we are indebted for representations of those elegant remains of antiquity that have contributed so much to the advancement of our knowledge of fine form. Volumes of verbal description will never convey so true an idea of a thing, as the most slight sketch.

To be able on the spot to make a sketch of a fine building, beautiful prospect, or any curious production of nature or of art, is not only a very desirable and elegant accomplishment, but in the highest degree entertaining. To treasure up whatever may occur in our travels, either for future use or to illustrate conversation ; to represent the

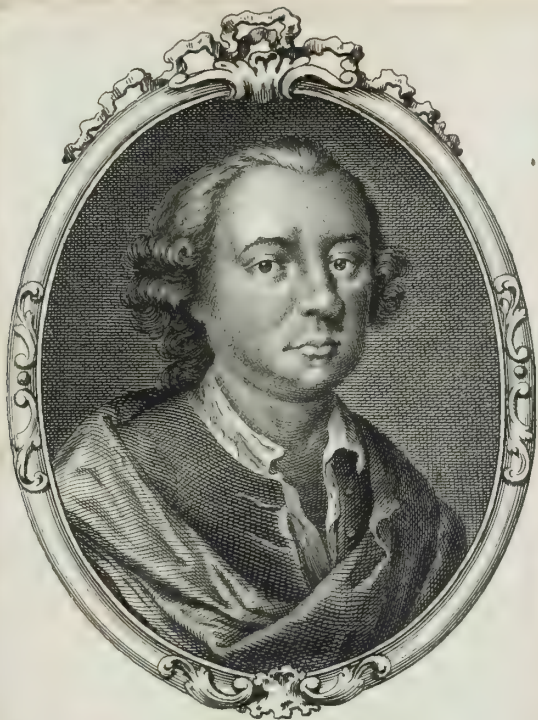
* Dagley's Compendium.

deeds of the great of former ages, and to preserve the features of our most valued friends, has made this art not only one of the highest embellishments of our nature, but the delight of all ages. The greatest writers have united to praise, and empires to encourage it. It has been, in the highest degree, morally useful ; and, where it has flourished, conferred honour on the country. In fact, society could not sustain a more severe loss than in being deprived of it, as many comforts and all those elegancies that adorn the present state of our being, must depart with it.

Independently of keeping the mind employed, the arts contribute to harmonise the temper ; and the power of drawing brings with it so much mental enjoyment, that youth, in order to be occupied, is not tempted to precipitate itself into the ruinous and destructive vices of gaming and drinking. It defends us in the meridian of life from the wild schemes of ambition, and in old age it becomes a sure shield against avarice. Shenstone observes, "Wherever there is a want of taste, we generally observe a love of money, and cunning."

We must not rank it among the least of the advantages resulting from the practice of the arts, that it inures the reflecting mind to the most enticing sort of logic, and opens the faculties more than years devoted to the acquiring of languages or the mere learning of words ; it teaches to *think*. Besides, while the mind is engaged in obtaining knowledge, we escape the insipidity and indifference connected with the tediousness of inactivity. Hope attends labour ; a blessing unknown to those who live lazily on the toil of others. The sensualist imagines he enjoys the world, because he eats, and drinks, and runs about upon it ; but to enjoy it truly, is to be sensible of its greatness and beauty.

"Wisdom is the parent of taste and virtue : the offspring of taste is pleasure ; of virtue, happiness. A man without taste may be said to be without piety, as, by not feeling, he is incapable of offering that praise which results from an admiration of the beauties of the creation ; he has a natural disrelish for what is good ; he becomes the enemy of all the world ; he feels not for a relative, a friend, or society ;



WILLIAM SHENSTONE ESQ.^R

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the law of the land is his gospel, and his attorney regulates his conscience ; he lives without hope, and dies without pity. *

Were the writer not apprehensive of being thought tedious, he could produce many other passages, from authors of experience, in support of the excellency of, and the advantages to be derived from, this rational pursuit. He will, however, finish these quotations with the observation of one who was fully competent to judge of such matters.

“I am well persuaded,” says Lord Shaftesbury, “that to be a virtuoso, (so far as befits a gentleman,) is a higher step towards becoming a man of virtue and good sense, than the being what, in this age, we call a scholar.”

Such are the sentiments of some of our most able moralists and very soundest philosophers respecting a study which, from a full conviction of its utility to society, the writer has wished to bring into that notice which, hitherto, it has failed to obtain.

The pleasures which it holds out, and the means by which they may be experienced, he has, to the best of his ability, and he is willing to hope not altogether unsuccessfully, endeavoured to point out. He also trusts that sufficient evidence has not been wanting to prove, that the chief of these advantages, great and extensive as we must confess them to be, are open to every one who will be at the pains requisite for acquiring them, and without which, it is totally impossible that they can ever be enjoyed.

“What we admire, we praise; and when we praise,
Advance it into notice, that its worth
Acknowledged, others may admire it too.
My charmer is not mine alone; my sweets,
And she that sweetens all my bitters too,
Nature, enchanting Nature, in whose form
And lineaments divine I trace a hand
That errs not, and find raptures still renew'd,
Is free to all men — universal prize.”

COWPER.

* Daye's Works.

CHAP. IV.

AMUSEMENT EXPERIENCED WHILE STUDYING IN THE PUBLIC PICTURE-GALLERIES ABROAD.

— HUGH ELLIOT, ESQ. — THE THREE GRACES. — BRITISH MINISTERS RESIDENT AT FOREIGN COURTS. — LORD HENLEY. — TWEDDEL'S REMAINS. — DUTY OF A BIOGRAPHER. — VIENNA. — ANECDOTE OF A GERMAN NOBLEMAN. — PICTURE-DEALERS. — PRINCE DE LIGNE. — MASQUERADES. — RIVER DANUBE. — GENERAL SUWARROW. — ENGLISHMEN TRAVELLING ON THE CONTINENT.

IT is scarcely possible, perhaps, for any one who has not experienced it, to form an adequate idea of the amusement derived from studying in one of the large and well-filled picture-galleries abroad. Various circumstances contribute to this enjoyment; for besides the contemplation of the exquisite works of art contained in them, many other sources of entertainment will be found. In these resorts of company are often to be met with the most accomplished artists or amateurs, possessing abilities of a very rare and superior kind, and whose conversation is generally no less agreeable than instructive. But this is not all; for amid the vast concourse of spectators who, during the summer months, come to visit these magnificent receptacles of art, numbers of the fair sex are continually to be seen. These ladies, as they pass through the rooms, naturally approach the easels of the different painters engaged in copying such pictures as have been taken down for their accommodation, and which are, not unfrequently, among the choicest in the place; and, such is the freedom of polished society abroad, that any further introduction is seldom required. As the services of one who is of course supposed to be well acquainted with the objects of contemplation around, are rarely found an unacceptable offer, the author has, in thus exercising the office of *cicerone*, often spent an occasional hour or two of leisure and relaxation, in a manner, of all others, the most delightful. The variety and novelty of the observations made

every now and then on these occasions, contributed to render such a pastime a very interesting and agreeable lounge.

Happening one day to be so engaged in the gallery at Dresden, in company with Mr. Elliot, our then resident minister at the court of Saxony, a gentleman possessing a singular talent for wit and happy repartee, we came near the easel of a young foreign practitioner, a smart, pert-looking disciple of the brush, who was copying a fine picture of the Italian school, the subject of which was the Three Graces. Nothing could be much more wretched than the presumptuous attempt which this genius had made; bad drawing, and worse colouring, with no one pretension to any thing good. After looking attentively at the young man's performance for a few seconds, Mr. Elliot turned to me with a significant look, and uttered, in the readiest manner imaginable, the following lines:—

“ Three graceless Graces
Did their graces hide,
Two show'd their ——
And the third her side :”

thus giving the attitude and appearance of these beauties with the greatest possible truth.

Having been led to the mention of this gentleman, the author cannot omit the opportunity afforded him of bearing testimony to the polite and friendly attentions shown by Mr. Elliot to his countrymen travelling abroad, and the hospitality they experienced in his sumptuous hotel.

Having observed, with sentiments of real indignation, in a work printed not many years ago, some observations respecting this gentleman, as illiberal as they are unfounded, the writer would think himself extremely wanting, as well as very ungrateful for the many favours received, were he to omit taking advantage of the present occasion, in doing an act of justice to a character so totally undeserving of any thing of the kind.

This refers to part of a volume (which, from its excellence and the reputation of the author, can never be forgotten,) entitled “ Twed-

del's Remains," in which it has not been scrupled to bring before the public, as a part of the private correspondence of the deceased, remarks in a very high degree injurious to the reputation of two worthy and irreproachable individuals.

For besides the observations alluded to respecting Mr. Elliot, (against which, as a *confidential* communication, and in which light it was intended to have been received, little need be thought,) there will be found, in the very same page, an equally unworthy attempt to hold up to derision another gentleman no less exalted and respectable; I mean our envoy-extraordinary resident at that time at the court of Vienna, Sir Morton Eden, Bart. the present Lord Henley, than whom a more polite, friendly, and, at the same time, hospitable minister, no capital in Europe could contain.

That the bitter reflections on the characters of these ministers had been excited by some sudden fit of spleen, acting upon a highly nervous and irritable frame, there cannot be a doubt, since the writer of them was well known to have possessed a most excellent heart; but that any one should so mistake the duty of that office which liberal biography demands, as to introduce into his work a paragraph so extremely prejudicial to the parties concerned — men in exalted situations, and who were still living, seems past comprehension, and which it would almost appear had no other purpose in view than that of exciting, against two most valuable characters, the contempt and derision of the world.

It is hoped that the warmth of the author's feelings upon an occasion like this will be excused, actuated as he is by that sentiment alone, which a sense of justice demands, towards the slandered reputation of two gentlemen, with whom it was his good fortune to be well acquainted, and for whose services, performed in very difficult times, and, not unfrequently, under circumstances the most arduous, far removed from their homes, their country, and their friends, the public stand indebted in a very eminent degree.

Having spent more than the whole of two winters at Vienna, and nearly as great a length of time at Dresden; and being uncon-

nected, in the very remotest degree, with the administration, either at home or abroad, or with any one holding an official situation, the author may, he thinks, be entitled to some degree of credence in what has been said.

Taking it, however, even for granted, that the lamented Mr. Tweddel was so unfortunate as not to meet with that attention which he might have expected, still does it follow that gentlemen, officiating in a high and important function of the state, the very representatives of majesty, — does it follow that characters so exalted are to be exposed to the mire of every disappointed and mortified itinerant on the road? Let us but look for a moment at the situation in which such persons are placed, and consider how totally impossible it must be that any traveller, however distinguished his fortune or his abilities, can reasonably expect to be noticed by a minister abroad, unless a proper introduction has been received, and which there is no intention to insinuate Mr. Tweddel was without. The opportunities, indeed, which these gentlemen possess, of distinguishing the claims of each individual as he happens to arrive, are, to compare small things with great, little different from those of the landlord of an inn. How very absurd, for instance, and how altogether unfair would it be, for the traveller who rattles in a noisy hack-chaise, to complain because he had not experienced the like ceremonious attentions with him who comes rolling along in his own carriage and four? In the one case, the outward appearance alone is the sole criterion upon which the inn-keeper can with safety rely; so, in the other, letters of introduction, from quarters of respectability, furnish the only guide by which a minister can be governed in showing that courtesy and protection which he may feel it either his duty or his inclination to bestow.

The author has been led into these remarks principally from the circumstance of his having repeatedly heard very unfair and ill-judged complaints against our ministers resident abroad; which, although they may be little worthy of being regarded by them, are

often detrimental to other travellers, and, in most instances, are excited by private pique only, or disappointment.

Though the author was not so fortunate as to have been acquainted with the late Mr. Tweddel, he followed him much too closely into Trinity College, and different parts of Germany, to be ignorant of his amiable and kind-hearted disposition. What, may it then be asked, would *he* have thought of an exposure of remarks, as injurious to his own reputation as they are uncharitable to the feelings of the individuals against whom they have been so unfairly produced?

“ I consider,” says a distinguished biographer, “ an editor as guilty of the basest injury to the dead, who admits into the posthumous volumes of an author, whom he professes to love and admire, any composition which his own conscience informs him *that author*, if he could speak from the tomb, would direct him to suppress.” *

Before dismissing this unpleasant subject, the writer cannot refrain from observing, that the attempt “ to offer some qualification of the sentiments expressed in letter 17, of the correspondence on the subject of diplomacy,” appears very far from being any thing that may at all be considered as a vindication for so strange a proceeding.

He is, at the same time, truly sorry in being compelled to speak thus harshly of one who, for any thing he knows to the contrary, may have had no ill intention in view ; but, let it be remembered, these gentlemen were the author’s friends ; they have been grossly misrepresented, and he, therefore, does not hesitate to stand forward in their behalf, however feeble or ineffectual this attempt at their vindication may prove.

As it may, not unlikely, be imagined, that in thus advocating their cause the writer is influenced by other motives than those of mere justice and disinterested regard, towards the reputation of

* Hayley’s Life of Cowper.



these gentlemen, he will barely state that, subsequently to the period alluded to, and which is now nearly five and twenty years ago, one of them he has, literally, seen but once, and the other he has not been so fortunate as ever to have met with since ; and that, moreover, he is unconnected, in any way, with either of them ; notwithstanding which, he must ever retain towards them both the very warmest sentiments of esteem.

That the very satirical observations alluded to were written in confidence, and never intended to pass beyond the bounds of private communication, may be clearly inferred from the concluding passage of the very epistle in which they were penned. The late Mr. Tweddel finishes in these words ; viz. “ What a letter have I penned !—full of all kinds of unimportant matters, unconnected together ! When I once begin to write to *you*, I go on as if I was talking. I have not time to read over again this long collection of nonsense ; therefore excuse what I have written, *calamo currente*, for it must be full of mistakes and *unintelligibilities*.”

The author will add, that that part of the volume in question, “ Tweddel’s Remains,” is a valuable and interesting work.

The mention of Vienna recalls to the author’s memory an anecdote respecting a nobleman with whom he was acquainted in that capital, some years ago, whose fondness for pictures was carried to an extraordinary excess, and in the amassing of which the proprietor had spent not only the greater part of his life, but, unfortunately, almost the whole of his estate also. The mind, indeed, of this gentleman appears to have been, at all times, so completely wrapped up in these objects of his delight, as to have scarcely allowed opportunity for the consideration of any thing besides.

It must be premised that the individual alluded to, the Count T——, being the younger son of a noble family, had been destined for the holy office, of which he was created a canon, a situation of considerable eminence among the clergy of Vienna.

One day, upon an occasion of peculiar solemnity, when officiating at the high altar, in the celebration of mass, and at that parti-

cular moment of intense silence and attention when all around are under the impression of the greatest awe, it so happened that while in the act, with uplifted eyes and suppliant hands, of raising the host, he accidentally espied before him a picture-cleaner, with whom had been left one of his paintings for repair; and totally forgetting the situation and the character he was in, he suddenly exclaimed, to the astonishment of his pious and prostrate congregation, “ Coquin ! où est mon Rembrandt ?” *

Many other stories were current respecting this singular character, such as his having at one time, when intently engaged in cleaning a picture, under the dirt and accumulated varnish of which he was anxiously expecting to bring out something unusually fine, absolutely thrust his arm quite up to the elbow through the decayed and rotten canvass.

This unfortunate gentleman was, at length, under the necessity of parting with these last favourite remains of his property, and as he had reason to believe that the British capital was the surest market for such commodities, he formed the resolution of transmitting thither the whole of his collection. Previously, however, to taking this step, and with the view of arranging matters in the best possible way preparatory to exposing them for sale, the Count determined to consult, by letter, with an artist then resident in London, with whom he had formed an acquaintance some time before at Vienna, and who, at the period alluded to, was an associate of the Royal Academy. The superscription of his epistle on this occasion was as follows ; viz.

“ To A—— B——, Esq.
Ass to the Royal Academy,
London:”

a mode of address which, until the letter was opened, occasioned no little surprise to the author's friend, by whom it had been received.

* “ You rascal ! where is my Rembrandt ?”

This illfated nobleman was doomed to experience additional mortification in finding how very greatly he had been deceived in his estimate of the collection, which, for the most part, had been purchased of unprincipled picture-dealers, since the whole of it produced little more than sufficient for defraying the custom-house duties required upon its admission into this country.

Though such occurrences are by no means uncommon, it is nevertheless too frequently the custom to abuse this class of tradesmen. The writer, however, does not hesitate to declare, in their justification, that he is at this moment acquainted with some most respectable characters in that line of business, with whom he has, for years, had transactions, and who are, with great justice, entitled to be accounted no other than men of the strictest integrity; men who, from their knowledge and attainments, would do honour to any calling or profession. He will venture to assure our amateurs that, provided they are willing to abstain from putting themselves into the hands of those whose characters are unknown, and more particularly of foreigners, who traffic in such works of art, and have transactions only with men of established probity and respectability, it is impossible to say from how much mortification, disappointment, vexation, and actual loss they may save themselves.

The name of Vienna cannot be mentioned without exciting in the author's mind reflections of a most gratifying nature. A more delightful city for a stranger, at the time alluded to, (for since the great influx of English on the Continent things appear to be very materially changed,) it is scarcely possible to imagine; and a more uniformly kind, friendly, hospitable set of people, including both the *noblesse* and the *bourgeoisie*, which two classes in Germany are entirely distinct, was no where to be found.

At the period referred to, in 1797, the English were, in a particular manner, well received in this city, it being immediately after our great victory over the French fleet at Aboukir; the most marked attentions, on all occasions, were every where shown them; and as there happened to be, just then, few of our countrymen abroad, and

especially at the German courts, there was no end of invitations to my fellow-traveller and myself, which rendered our stay, during the greater part of the two years that we resided there, extremely pleasant. The author would, indeed, consider himself as very ungrateful, could he ever forget the numberless instances of kindness and friendly politeness experienced from all classes of society in the place.

The early hours, and general mode of living, in this capital, were peculiarly adapted for the enjoyment of those pleasures which the intercourse of polite and well informed persons of both sexes is calculated to bestow, and which, at least according to his way of thinking, were much more rational than those now-a-days in use in our own country, where, in consequence of the late dinner, little conversation between them can, comparatively speaking, take place; so that those interesting assemblies called "*Conversazioni*" abroad, are, in England, but partially understood. For whatever else we may justly boast of, the society of the fair does not, it is impossible to be denied, appear to be the leading consideration in our domestic arrangements at present in vogue. The number of houses open every night in Vienna, among the higher classes, and which were the constant resort of company from every country and nation in Europe; the talent, the accomplishments, the lively and animated conversation, and kind hospitality which universally reigned, connected with such a variety of other pleasurable circumstances, literally left nothing for a stranger to desire.

Among those persons whose society was, in a more especial manner, agreeable and enlivening in the very highest degree, was Field-Marshal the Prince de Ligne, a character well known throughout Europe, not more, perhaps, from his own writings, than by those of Madame de Stael, who pronounces him to have been "a man of the most brilliant conversation in all Europe,—a great personal favourite with most of the crowned heads of the age,—a great lover of war and of literature, and equally well acquainted with the distinguished generals and famous authors of the day."

The author had frequent opportunities of enjoying the society

of this highly polished nobleman he and his fellow-traveller having occasionally had the honour of receiving him as their guest. The talent he displayed for conversation was truly remarkable; so much brilliancy of imagination, and such a readiness of wit, accompanied with manners at once so dignified, playful, and refined, have very rarely been united in the same individual in a similar degree; there was, indeed, continually some sally or *bon mot* to excite either one's pleasure or surprise.

Among the many witticisms and *jeux d'esprit* with which he never failed to enliven the company he was in, the writer will mention one that occurred with himself. It will be necessary, in order to understand the point of the jest, to bear in mind that Vienna, being a fortress, is surrounded with ramparts, having a moat, lines, and a glacis, between the interior of the city and its suburbs, which last form by much the most extensive and populous parts of the town. It is in the former, however, that the chief of the nobility and persons of fashion reside.

In consequence, it was supposed, of some pecuniary embarrassment, the Prince de Ligne found it convenient to retire without the circuit of the walls, and to take up his abode at a short distance from the town. One day, as his Excellency arrived for dinner, and was accosted as usual, "Bon jour, Prince de Ligne," &c. he immediately replied, "Très bien, je vous remercie; mais à présent, s'il vous plait, je suis Prince *hors des Lignes*." *

The public amusements of Vienna were no less inviting than the entertainment afforded in the different houses of private individuals; plays, operas, music, dancing, and masquerades, or, as they were termed, "*Redouts*." This last-mentioned species of diversion was, to a stranger, of a very novel and interesting kind, inasmuch as in one of these public resorts might be seen, promiscuously assembled, all the different ranks which the society of a large capital

* This is a play upon the name, and means literally, "Very well, I thank you; but, just now, if you please, I am Prince *beyond the lines*."

contains, from the emperor himself to the lowest peruke-maker in the place; from the princess to the marchande de modes; the ambassador, down to his valet-de-chambre, or even laquais-de-place: an assemblage, in fine, of every class, and such as is to be seen, perhaps, in no other city.

Still, notwithstanding so very heterogeneous a mixture, nothing but the greatest good behaviour and decorum were at all times visible; no vulgar noise, no drunken disturbance, amidst all this hilarity, either within doors or without; no crashing of carriages, or swearing, or scolding, in either taking up or in setting down; none of that turbulence and confusion so observable at almost every place of resort in the metropolis of our own country, and which are oftentimes attended with the most disagreeable, if not the most serious, results. Oh, the comforts and the delight of such order, so much regularity, and such a well-directed police! Let fastidious and discontented radicals say what they please about liberty, and infringement of rights, the author will not hesitate to maintain, that such a partial and wholesome privation of it, as that to which he alludes, tends materially, and most undeniably, to the comfort and the happiness of all. Where, in fact, let it be asked, is the individual that suffers, or has just reason to complain; or, rather, where is not the one that does not experience the every-day advantages arising from it? During the whole time the author was in this most enchanting resort of all that is delightful, never once did he witness, at the public places of amusement, any thing that might be termed indecorous or rude.

It so happened, that one of the above-mentioned entertainments was announced for the evening of the day on which we arrived at Vienna, and notwithstanding the fatigue of the journey, for travelling in Germany, it must be observed, in the winter season, is no trifling matter, especially in the northern part, we determined to take advantage of so favourable an opportunity of seeing the manners and the general appearance of the inhabitants of the place. With the assistance of our valet-de-chambre, a clever active fellow, and one well ac-

quainted with the customs of all the different cities usually visited by travellers in making the grand tour, we were presently equipped, and proceeded with much expectation to join in the pleasures of the fête. It was not long from the time of our first entrance in the saloon, having scarcely had leisure to examine the splendour and magnificence every where displayed, when our admiration was suddenly changed into sentiments of surprise, occasioned by the almost incredible appearance of our own valet-de-chambre, whom, to our utter astonishment, we observed in the very middle and most conspicuous part of the room, moving, with all the airs and graces of a Didelot, in a regular slow minuet, and in the performance of which the gentleman seemed perfectly at home. The superior art displayed in the management of his person and limbs during his well-timed and easy movement in the dance, appeared to be no way lost upon the fair damsel of his choice, and who, considering her person and appearance altogether, could not certainly be deemed otherwise than worthy of the signal mark of distinction she had that night the honour to receive; there were, indeed, few persons in the room who figured either so gracefully or so well.

This man, besides being one of the best servants, was the very cleverest fellow possible, and there, really, seemed to be no one single thing that he was not able to perform. He was a most capital cook; in music, he was scientifically skilled, being a first-rate performer on the flute, and capable of taking a part upon that instrument in any concert whatever. He would break a horse, or look after a farm. He was an excellent drill-serjeant, and no less useful in the garden, the cellar, or the house. His knowledge of the different languages of Europe was equal to any thing that occasion required; and with the authors and poets in his own, he evinced an acquaintance befitting an employment more honourable than that which he filled.

In no one quality, in fact, or accomplishment was he deficient, and his activity and solicitude to please, rendered him by far the most trust-worthy and the pleasantest domestic that can be imagined.

In few instances, perhaps, could the well known line of Johnson be more aptly applied, —

“ All arts a Frenchman knows.”

At the period alluded to, there was a horse-dealer at Vienna of the name of Hyems, who, not unlike many of the trade, was, to speak technically, “ *a very deep hand*,” or, in other words, a sharp sort of jockey, as there is reason to think several of our countrymen could testify. During conversation at a dinner-party, one of the guests called out, “ What do you think, *mon ami* ? Hyems is *done up* ;— the rascal was declared insolvent, only this very day.” — “ Then *solvitur acris Hyems*,” was the immediate reply. *

There was a custom practised at Vienna which always struck the writer as well worthy of imitation, and he believes not to be found in any other capital. This was the extraordinary rapidity with which, after a heavy fall of snow, in the space often of a single night, the greater part of the city would be entirely cleared. No sooner did symptoms of a thaw begin to take place, than the inhabitants of the various prisons were made to turn out, and with spades, pickaxes, &c. the whole mass was presently carted, by torch-light, out of the way. As the space within the walls was comparatively small, this became easily practicable, and was no less quickly performed ; the effect was perfectly like magic, and in a few hours, if the sun happened to come out, the pavement would be as dry and as clean as during the summer months of the year. Those who know, and have experienced the difficulties which are continually to be met with in London at the breaking up of a long frost, and the sudden melting of an accumulation of snow, will be able to form some idea of the sort of comfort alluded to.

The power of the river Danube on such occasions is frequently most tremendous, and its effects devastating and wide-spreading in a very fearful degree. During an unusually severe winter, that the

* This being a play upon the word, a translation but ill explains it, — literally, “ Keen winter (*Hyems*) is broken up.”

author was at Vienna, and after a long-continued fall of snow ; when the cold was so intense as to freeze to death, at different times, several of the sentinels on duty upon the ramparts of the town, a spectacle of this kind, or, as it is termed, a *débâcle*, took place. As the thaw was extremely sudden, much apprehension was entertained from the threatened inundation, which, under such circumstances, spreads to a most enormous extent, destroying every thing before it, houses, cattle, &c. and laying the whole country, for many miles, entirely under water. What, however, in a more particular manner, excited the curiosity of the inhabitants at this period, was the expected carrying away, by the ice, of the immense line of bridges, which, from the constant rapidity and depth of the stream, are necessarily constructed of wood. This being a sight of rare occurrence, and which happens only upon the very sudden breaking up of a severe frost, and the melting of a deep snow, an unusual sensation prevailed ; the emperor, the court, and almost the whole population of the city, flocked with the greatest eagerness and anxiety to view the impending destruction, and which certainly proved a scene of the most extraordinary kind. The enormous masses of ice which came rushing down the boiling and sonorous stream — the immense multitude assembled around — the tremendous crash of the bridge, which, with almost breathless expectation, the spectators had seen labouring in the flood — then the striking vacuity of space, occasioned by its slow and majestic disappearance from the view, like that left upon the foundering of a huge ship at sea, and which fills the heart with sensations of dread ; — all these circumstances, together, presented a most curious and interesting sight. Indeed one more truly imposing, or better calculated to make a serious and lasting impression upon the mind, it is not easy to imagine ; unless, perhaps, it might be that which occurred in the same neighbourhood very shortly afterwards, upon the appearance of the immense Russian army under General Suwarrow, when passing in front of the palace of Shönbrun*, upon its

* An Imperial Palace, about a couple of miles from Vienna.

march into Italy, to oppose the rapid and alarming career of the French.

The effect and the fate of each of them were nearly the same ; for, like the impetuous torrent, this mighty host, carrying death and desolation around, was equally destined never more to return ; being almost as quickly swallowed up (with the exception of a few) in the overwhelming tide of exterminating war, as the other became engulfed in the ocean to which it was seen hurrying along.

Fortunately the day was favourable for the contemplation of so singular a procession, which being composed of the many different tribes from the extensive empire of the north, Calmucks, Cossacks, those who inhabit the Ukrain, and the banks of the Don, &c. each armed and habited in its own particular costume ; numbers of them having at their breasts three, four, and sometimes five or even six medals, the trophies of Ismaïlow, Prague, and other bloody sieges and assaults, and which, in many instances, were half covered with their beards, could not fail to excite in the minds of all present the greatest admiration. This feeling, however, was mingled with sentiments of commiseration, upon reflecting how many out of that vast concourse of human beings were doomed to fall in the sanguinary conflict to which they were hastening ; and how many unfortunate wives and their children were very shortly to experience the loss of, at once, their chief consolation and means of support.

“ Of unrecorded name
Died the mean man ; yet did he leave behind
One who did never say her daily prayers
Of him forgetful, who to every tale
Of the distant war, lending an eager ear,
Grew pale, and trembled. At her cottage door
The wretched one shall sit, and with dim eye
Gaze o’er the plain, where on his parting steps
Her last look hung. Nor ever shall she know
Her husband dead, but tortured with vain hope,
Gaze on, — then, heart-sick, turn to her poor babe,
And weep it fatherless.”

SOUTHEY.



*Robert Southey Esq.
Poet Laureate.*

What formed in the opinion of the author the most striking feature in the whole proceeding, was the display of heart-felt congratulation so universally expressed by this multitude of warriors towards their old and much-beloved commander, Suwarrow, who had preceded them to Vienna, than whom, perhaps, no general was ever more adored by his soldiers.

The fate of this officer, who, on so many brilliant and celebrated occasions had distinguished himself, was singularly hard ; he escaped, it is true, the dreadful carnage of the field, and, with a remnant of his faithful followers, contrived to find his way home. But for what did he return ? Or what was the recompense he received for all his hard-earned victories, the wounds, the perils, and the privations he had endured ? What, but to be coldly received by his sovereign ; to be slighted, and left to die of disappointment, of chagrin, and a broken heart !

There was a little trait of Suwarrow, a good deal talked of at Vienna at the time, which showed that, notwithstanding his warlike roughness of character and uncouth habits, he was not deficient in the more soft and kindlier feelings, or in those delicate attentions to the female sex which ever bespeak a gentle and amiable disposition. When upon his road to join the army, which was appointed to act under his command, it happened that he passed, in the middle of the night, through the town in which his wife had taken up her evening's abode. As he had not a moment to spare, he merely entered her lodging-room, with the intention of satisfying himself that she was well ; finding her, however, fast asleep, he immediately retired, without disturbing her repose, having previously left upon her pillow, as a token of his affection, a very costly ornament, set with brilliants and other precious stones.

Suwarrow affected much singularity in his manners and dress. Whilst at Vienna he dined at eleven o'clock, and did almost every thing in a different manner from any body else. He was regularly attended by a couple of Cossacks, one of whom poured a bucket of cold water over him, upon his first getting out of bed, let the weather

be ever so inclement. He was a great favourite with the Empress Catherine, who well knew how to appreciate his extraordinary merit as a commander.

These Russian troops having never before met the French in the field, at first little regarded the destructive fire of their *mitraille*, in consequence of which, thousands who undauntingly marched up directly to the cannon's mouth, were presently mown down. This occurred especially among the Cossacks, who, in their warfare with the Turks, had been accustomed to carry every thing sword in hand.

After a great deal of hard fighting, a misunderstanding took place between the courts of Petersburg and Vienna, and Suwarrow received orders to separate from the Austrians, and to go into Switzerland with the few troops that he had left, to take the command of those that had just arrived there, under the conduct of M. de Korsakow. He directed his march through Italian Switzerland, and soon saw himself surrounded by the French, who had just completely routed, at Zurich, the army that he was going to join. Massena thought himself sure of crushing him, but Suwarrow overcame all obstacles, and re-animated the courage of his soldiers, who were many times about to give way. It is said, that one day, seeing them resolved to lay down their arms, rather than climb mountains again, and fight amid snow and ice, he coolly ordered a ditch to be dug, stretched himself in it before them, and told them to cover him with earth, adding, that he had only that service to ask of them, since they refused to follow him. This species of eloquence electrified his dispirited soldiers, and they immediately swore never to abandon him. He defeated the corps that came up with him, and arrived in Germany with the shattered remains of his army. This retreat was the last exploit of Suwarrow, the Russian troops having been recalled, and he continued his march to Petersburg with his army, in obedience to the strict orders of Paul I. He died on the 18th of May, 1800, at his estate at Palendorff in Esthonia, at the age of seventy-one.

It has been a complaint often repeated, and with, perhaps, too much reason, that some of our countrymen who travel on the Continent are, after their return, not always so mindful of the attentions and hospitality they may have received as might be expected, being frequently more ready to expose the defects rather than to commend the good qualities of those by whom they have been noticed abroad. Should these pages be so fortunate as to obtain the perusal of any individual connected with Vienna, he will find that at least one Englishman is not forgetful of kindness received, — one who seizes with pleasure the opportunity of expressing his sincere acknowledgments for the many polite and disinterested acts of attention he experienced.

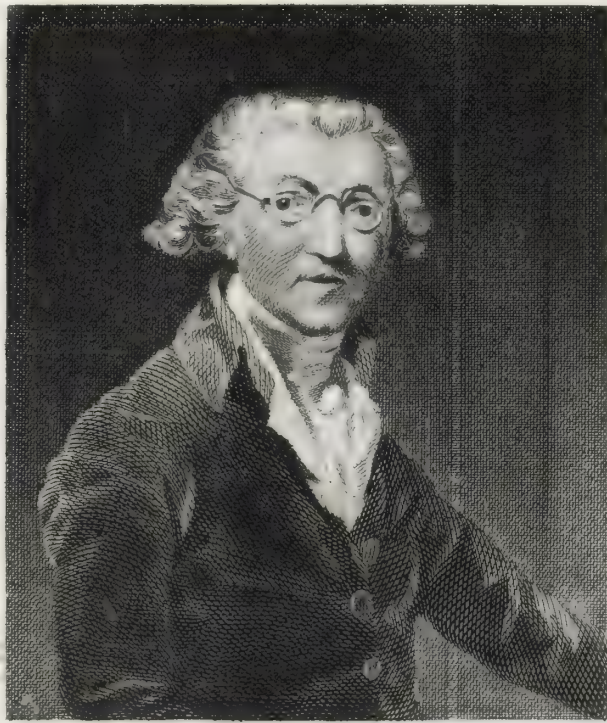
CONCLUSION.

HAVING brought to a conclusion the arrangement of the various matter which it appeared to the author might tend to the furtherance of the objects proposed, he refrains from intruding longer upon the notice of the reader, than merely to request, that in scanning the merits of this undertaking, the *motives* which influenced him in the attempt, rather than the want of ability too observable in the execution of it, may be held principally in view.

Whether the materials which have been collected, or the manner in which they are put together, may excite interest in others ; — or whether from the perusal of the evidence which these testimonies afford to the merit of our great landscape painter, and the encomiums bestowed upon landscape in general, any one may be led to the study of so delightful an art, it is not for him to determine. In either case, the object he had in view will be accomplished. A degree of justice, however inadequate, will, on the one hand, have been rendered to the manes of Wilson ; and, on the other, a source of pleasure, of the very highest order, will have been opened to the individual who, in the contemplation of Nature, seeks to add grace to her beauties by associating her with the refinements of art.

“ O how canst thou renounce the boundless store
 Of charms which Nature to her votary yields !
 The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
 The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields ! —
 O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven ? ”

BEATTIE.



Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS .

Of one thing the writer may be allowed to flatter himself, and that is, that however imperfect his performance may be thought, he cannot be accused of having written with indifference or luke-warmness on subjects of so much importance. To have been wanting in this particular, would be a fault undeserving of excuse; for with what shadow of reason can an author expect that his reader shall enter, with any serious interest, into his work, unless it can be made to appear that he himself is in earnest?

That such has really been the case in respect of this volume, and that it has been written *con amore*, if the expression may be used, there is, it is hoped, sufficient internal evidence to prove.

“No man,” says Sir Joshua Reynolds, “deserves better of mankind than he who has the art of opening sources of intellectual pleasures and instruction by means of the senses.”*

That the pursuit recommended is capable of affording both pleasure and instruction the most highly intellectual, and that by the very means mentioned by the President, it has been the writer’s endeavour to show.

How far “its worth shall be acknowledged,” or in what degree “others shall admire it,” in consequence of this feeble endeavour to “advance it into notice,” it remains for the candid and unprejudiced reader to pronounce.

“The biography of eminent men, the works which treat of art and science, may be said to be useful even when they cannot be considered as deeply instructive; they keep up our ardour, at least, if they do not increase our information.

“Productions of this kind, when they contain no gross or dangerous errors, will always employ to advantage the hours of leisure and lassitude, and often effect, as an amusement, that benefit which they fail to accomplish by instruction.”

Should it, therefore, fortunately happen, that the reader really has been amused, the author’s end is obtained; since instruction, in

* Northcote’s Life of Reynolds.

that case, may at the same time have been derived from his work. If, in the perusal of any part of it, a smile has been drawn from him, he has, most likely, been pleased ; if his heart has been softened, it has been amended ; and if he has laughed, his health is the better for it, and, consequently, some portion, however trifling, may have been added (so, at least, says the sensitive Sterne,) to the comfort and duration of his days.

I shall conclude in the words of an admired author. "I may truly say, that whatever be the fate or reception of the preceding production, it will owe its author nothing. In sickness or in health, whether of body or mind, I have found in these pursuits what can alone alleviate the one, or give enjoyment to the other — occupation and engagement."

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APPENDIX.

APPENDIX A.

Joos Momper may be considered as a great landscape painter ; he was born about the year 1580 ; we do not know, however, exactly, either the place of his nativity, the name of his father, or who was his master. We must take it for granted, that, like a man of genius, he had no other than Nature herself ; he painted every thing from her with much freedom of touch, without finishing any thing, in such a way that his pictures have their effect only when seen at a distance. This manner is less pleasing to the eye, and has, therefore, obtained him few followers ; but, prejudice apart, has it not, after all, quite as much merit as the more finished style, provided it produces its effect, that it excites our admiration, that it deceives the spectator ? What can the finished manner of Breugel, or Paul Bril, or of Savery do more ?

Momper did not follow the taste of his country, he sought for Nature, and that common mother exhibited herself to him in a manner altogether different from that in which she appeared to the other Flemish painters.

The enchanting views which his landscapes display, have gained him considerable reputation ; his pictures produce a prodigious effect by their gradation ; and by their admirable extensiveness of the prospect, they train on the imagination more than any other painter. It must not, however, be denied, that the pictures of this master rarely find admission into the first collections, and do not sell high. A certain negligence, discoverable when one looks at them near, and their undecided touch, do not allow them to be placed in the same rank with those of the other Flemings, which are principally esteemed for their high finishing.

APPENDIX B.

A catalogue of Pictures, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, burnt at the fire at Belvoir Castle, the seat of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, October 26. 1816.

The Nativity.

The Infant Jupiter.

An old Man reading a Ballad.

The calling of Samuel.

The Venetian Boy.

The Duchess of Rutland, whole length.

The Duke of Rutland, do.

Lord Charles, Lord Robert, and Lord William Manners, with a Spaniel Dog.

Lord Granby, Lady Elizabeth, and Lady Katharine Manners.

Lord Chatham.

The Duchess of Beaufort.

Kitty Fisher.

The Marquis of Lothian.

Sir Joshua's Portrait.

The Marquis of Granby, Hussar (John Notzell) and War Horse.

Lord Mansfield.

General Oglethorpe.

Lady Granby.

Head of Lord Granby.

Besides the above-mentioned pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds, many other very valuable paintings were destroyed.

APPENDIX C.

List of Wilson's Pupils.

Mr. Plimer, died young in Italy.

Mr. Huddersfield, who afterwards took orders.

Mr. Carr, died young, being only in the 22d year of his age. He was considered by Wilson as his most promising pupil, and frequently assisted him in the minor parts of his pictures.

Mr. Steel, a native of Ireland.

Joseph Farrington, R.A.

William Hodges, R.A., celebrated as the companion of our great circumnavigator, Cook, in two voyages of discovery.

Tom Jones, who painted a large landscape in which Mortimer introduced the subject of Orpheus killed by the nymphs and others.

Thomas Jenkins. This gentleman accompanied Wilson to Rome.

—— Frebairn has been mentioned as a pupil of Wilson, though there seems some reason to doubt it, as he studied under, and is known to have been articled to, the elder Reinagle, R.A.

Mr. Feary.

Mr. Atkinson.

W. Marlow.

—— Burton.

—— Boulton, a horse painter, well known in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.

—— Ganden.

—— Johnson.

There were, also, several amateurs, who received instruction from Wilson. Among these may be numbered,

Sir George Beaumont, Bart.

Mr. Parsons, the celebrated comedian.

Mr. Stowers.

APPENDIX D.

In the following List will be found many of Wilson's principal Pictures, with the names of the possessors of them. As, however, they are from one cause or other continually changing hands, it is impossible to be very accurate in such a statement. From the catalogue of the British Institution for the year 1814, a considerable number of the under mentioned have been taken.

SUBJECTS.

POSSESSORS.

Niobe	-	-	-	-	-	His R. H. the Duke of Gloucester.
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	Sir G. Beaumont, Bart.
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	Marquis of Stafford.
Phaëton	-	-	-	-	-	—— Blundell, Esq. <i>Ince.</i>
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	Earl Cowper.
View of Rome, large	-	-	-	-	-	Earl of Dartmouth.
Mæcenas's Villa, at Tivoli	-	-	-	-	-	Sir G. Beaumont, Bart.
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	Late W. Leader, Esq.
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	J. N. Hughes, Esq.
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Booth ¹⁵⁵ . <i>— James M. G. G. G.</i>
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	Late J. Farrington, Esq.
Celadon and Amelia	-	-	-	-	-	{ W. Smith, Esq. M. P. I believe now in the possession of Lord Lansdown.
View on the river Po, in Italy, large	-	-	-	-	-	{ Sir J. Leicester, Bart.
Solitude, companion to do.	-	-	-	-	-	Edward Gray, Esq. <i>Harrigay.</i>
Apollo and the Seasons	-	-	-	-	-	Samuel Rogers, Esq.
Meleager and Atalanta	-	-	-	-	-	Do.
Sion House, from Kew Gardens	-	-	-	-	-	W. Leader, Esq.
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	—— Daniell, Esq.
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	T. Wright, Esq.
Cicero at his Villa	-	-	-	-	-	Sir W. W. Wynne, Bart.
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	J. Hawkins, Esq.
Do.	-	-	-	-	-	W. Fitzhugh, Esq.
Lake of Nemi	-	-	-	-	-	Sir R. C. Hoare, Bart. <i>SAD. 11/1/18</i>

SUBJECTS.	POSSESSORS.
Lake of Nemi - - -	Lady Ford.
Do. - - - -	T. Wright, Esq.
Do. - - - -	— Hill, Esq.
A River Scene - - -	Sir Thomas Lawrence.
A similar to do. - - -	T. Wright, Esq.
Solitude - - - -	J. Roberts, Esq.
View of Tabley House, Cheshire -	Sir J. Leicester, Bart.
View on the river Dee - - -	Lord Grosvenor.
Do. - - - -	Sir William Pilkington, Bart.
Landscape. - - - -	Do.
View of Wilton House - - -	Earl of Pembroke.
Do. - - - -	Do.
Do. - - - -	Do.
View at Wilton - - - -	Do.
View on the coast of Baiæ -	Lady Douglass.
Do. - - - -	S. Peploe, Esq.
View on the Tiber, near Rome -	Earl of Dartmouth.
View near Rome - - - -	Do.
Do. - - - -	Lady Douglass.
Do. - - - -	Marquis Camden.
Do. - - - -	J. Hawkins, Esq.
Temple of Bacchus, near Rome -	J. Ewer, Esq.
View of Rome - - - -	Miss Boothe. <i>passed to Lady Ford</i>
Adrian's Villa - - - -	Earl of Dartmouth.
View of the Bridge of Rimini -	W. Leader, Esq.
Adrian's Villa - - - -	Viscount Palmerston.
View on the Strada Nomentana -	S. Peploe, Esq.
View on the river Thames -	Lady Ford.
View at Milbank - - - -	M. M. Zackary, Esq.
An Italian Scene - - - -	Do.
View of Croome, Worcestershire -	Earl of Coventry.
View of Rosamond's Pond, St. James's Park - - - -	} — Brugg, Esq.
Landscape - - - -	
View of Moor Park, Herts -	Samuel Rogers, Esq.
View from do. - - - -	Lord Dundas.
Landscape, figures fishing -	Do.
	J. Todhunter, Esq.

SUBJECTS.

POSSESSORS.

Landscape, figures fishing	-	Viscount Palmerston.
Do. do. - -	-	Sir M. W. Ridley, Bart.
Do. do. small	-	John Knight, Esq.
Landscape - - -	-	J. W. Steers, Esq.
Do. - - - -	-	Do.
Do. and figures - -	-	S. Squire, Esq.
Do. figures fishing - -	-	Earl of Egremont.
The Hermitage - - -	-	Do.
View in Italy - - -	-	Marquis of Aberdeen.
View of Dover - - -	-	Mrs. White.
View on the Tiber - -	-	Do.
A Woody Scene, large -	-	Sir W. W. Wynne, Bart.
A Landscape, do. - -	-	Do.
View near Llangollen Bridge	-	Do.
The Bridge at Llangollen, with	}	Do.
Castle Dinas Bran - -		
Landscape, with figures bathing	-	Mr. Coppin.
View of Ancona - - -	-	J. Hawkins, Esq.
View in the Strada Nomentana	-	Lady Ford.
View of Oakhampton Castle	-	Honourable Richard Hoare.
Ruins on the coast of Baiæ	-	J. Trower, Esq.
The Temple of Venus, on the coast	}	Ridley Colbourne, Esq.
of Baiæ - - - - -		
Landscape - - - -	-	Lady Ford.
Do. - - - - -	-	Do.
Upright Landscape, small	-	R. Ashley, Esq.
Landscape - - - -	-	J. Hawkins, Esq.
An Evening Scene - -	-	Mr. Coppin.
Landscape - - - -	-	Hon. A. Phipps.
Do. - - - - -	-	Sir R. C. Hoare, Bart.
Do. small - - - -	-	Thomas Daniell, Esq.
An Italian Scene - -	-	Rev. Dr. Marlow.
An upright Landscape -	-	Marquis Hastings.
Three small Landscapes, at Rise-	}	F. Chaplin, Esq.
holme, near Lincoln - -		
The Seasons - - - -	-	T. Tomkinson, Esq.

SUBJECTS.	POSSESSORS.
Two large Landscapes, at Selby House, near Welford, North- amptonshire - - -	Mrs. Payne, Selby House, Northamp- tonshire.
Tomb of the Horatii and Curiatii	
Broken Bridge of Narni - -	
Nymphs bathing - - -	
View, an Archway - - -	Do.
Landscape - - - -	Do.
Do. - - - - -	Do.
Island in the Gulf of Venice -	Do.

Niagara Picture 5 1/2 x 6 1/2 from drawing made 1762 by Lord Byron
 Engraved by Wm. Byrne 1774
 View of Garden Engr. (small) by Birch 1789
 William Blake Cell: Paul Pearson Engr. by W. Blake 1796

APPENDIX.

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SUBJECTS.

ENGRAVERS.

- more issued. ↑*
uniform in
size & paper.
- ✓ Bridge of Augustus, at Rimini - J. Farrington. 1776
 - ✓ In the Strada Nomentana - - Do.
 - ✓ Banks of the Tiber - - - J. Gandon.
 - ✓ Temple of Romulus and Remus - Do.
 - ✓ Castle of Ischia - - - Do.
 - ✓ Temple of Peace - - - M. Rooker.
 - ✓ Torre del Grotte, near Naples - W. Hodges.
 - at p. 102 A View of Rome - - - Middiman.

Meleager and Atalanta, mezzo-tinto - - - -

} Earlom. 771 - Same picture as Woodcut 1773 print

Tivoli, Dulwich College - - Cockburn.

Do. do. on steel - Charles Turner.

View on the river Dee - - T. Morris. 1774 (type of picture at Petworth)

Evening - - - Reynolds.

Morning

See Engraving? Cell Ford Park 1824

There is a volume of outline etchings, published at Oxford, from sketches by Wilson; with the exception, however, of two or three of them, they are little more than mere indications of ideas of subjects, with traces so undefined, as to be scarcely intelligible even to an artist.

There is a solitary figure piece signed by Fisher after R. Wilson -
 a charming Maroon like 3/4 of a young bearded man, in a landscape -
 "The Sleepy Eye that Speaks the Madding Soul"

THE END.

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